

उत्तिष्ठत
जाग्रत
प्राप्य
वरान्निबोधत



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

ARISE! AWAKE! AND STOP NOT TILL THE GOAL IS REACHED

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VEDIC PRAYERS

त्वं नः पाह्यम्हसो जातवेदो अघायतः ।
रक्षाणो ब्रह्मणस्कवे ॥

—Rg Veda, 6.16.30

O Agni (Jātaveda, fire born of Vedic sacrifices)! O originator and reminder (*kavi*) of hymns, protect us from those who intend to harm us.

यो नो अग्ने दुरेव आ मर्तो वधाय दाशति ।
तस्मान्नः पाह्यम्हसः ॥

—Rg Veda, 6.16.31

O Agni, protect us from those people with evil intentions, who wield arms to kill us. And please protect us from sinful tendencies.

त्वं तं देव जिह्वया परि बाधस्व दुष्कृतम् ।
मर्तो यो नो जिघांसति ॥

—Rg Veda, 6.16.32

O brilliant Agni! Annihilate our enemies using your flames. Our enemies are those who want to annihilate us.

Drama

EDITORIAL

'Where's Rāma?'

It's a village cinema theatre, popularly called 'tent cinema' because they pitch a tent, show some movies, and leave. The famous *Bharat Milāp* cinema is being shown. The tent is full. Bharata arrives on a horse. He goes straight to Kaikeyī's palace, finds her, and shouts: 'Where is Rāma?' Kaikeyī is silent. Bharata asks again. No answer. A third time. No. A fourth time in a loud tone: 'Where is Rāma?' Kaikeyī remains silent. Suddenly, a stone falls on Kaikeyī's face, puncturing the screen. Someone from the viewers has stood up, and is shouting: '*Bolge, saitān aurat!* Tell him, you devilish woman!' The show stops and there is light. To their astonishment, everyone in the tent see the rickshaw-puller of their village, Karim, shaking with anger and hurling insults at Kaikeyī. The tent-owner is a pious man and so he excuses Karim. One or two remark: 'Brother Karim! We read the *Rāmāyaṇa*, we meditate on Rāma. But we don't have such involvement as you do.'*

These are the days of endless soaps and TV serials. People remain glued to the TV to see serials that run into hundreds of episodes. Then there are cinemas. Hundreds of movies are released every year, and people spend a lot on seeing them. The days of drama are not altogether gone, though they have gone backstage. People enjoy dramas also.

Whatever may be the method of expression—TV serials, cinemas or dramas—people see them, and there it ends. Not everyone really enjoys seeing them. Of course they should be good in order for people to enjoy, but people don't 'really' enjoy even the so-called mas-

terpieces. And until they 'really' enjoy dramas, cinemas, or TV serials, there's little use wasting time and money on them.

Viewing is a Science

What is 'really' enjoying? 'Real' enjoyment from viewing cinema etc has a discipline. And that discipline has been elucidated in a systematic way in a great Hindu *śāstra* or scriptural discipline, called *nāṭya śāstra*. Ignorant people think that Hinduism means sectarianism, idol worship and meaningless rituals. They don't know how much thinking has been done in each field of life and thought here, and what wonderful methodologies have been adopted to make each single field a perfect system in itself, leading its adherent to the ultimate end of life. By merely being a grammarian one can realize God; by merely being a dramatist one can attain the highest. What's more, just by viewing dramas one can realize God! That's the wonder of Hinduism.

The great sage Bharata is the earliest author on dramaturgy, and his compendium bears the name *Nāṭya Śāstra*. This work has been commented upon in detail by another expert on dramaturgy from Kashmir by name Abhinava Gupta, and his commentary is called *Abhinavabhāratī*. This work was published in modern times in 1926 by the Central Library, Baroda, under the 'Gaekwad Oriental Series'. Manavalli Ramakrishna Kavi has edited the work, which runs into four volumes. *Nāṭya Śāstra* contains 37 chapters, of which the sixth is extremely important for our present discussion. This chapter deals with *rasa*.

Rasa: The Core of Experience

Some sages ask Bharata: 'We hear so much about *rasa*. Please inform us about it.'¹ Giving various derivative meanings to the

* Sri Ramakrishna says that Haladhari's father had tried to burn the face of the actor playing Kaikeyī.

1. *Nāṭya Śāstra*, 6.2.

term *rasa*, Bharata says that its root meaning is, 'rasyate iti rasah, that which brings out bliss is *rasa*.' *Rasa* is translated as sentiment; but *rasa* really means bliss. Every being has *rasa* or bliss within, since God, who is of the nature of bliss, resides in every heart. To manifest it is the goal. Though there are nine *rasas*, deleting *śānta* or the peaceful *rasa*, there are eight *rasas*:

सृङ्गारहास्यकरुणा रौद्रवीरभयानकाः ।
 बीभत्साद्भुतसंज्ञौ चेत् अष्टौ नाट्ये रसाः स्मृताः ॥
Śṛṅgāra-hāsyā-karuṇā
raudra-vīra-bhayānakāḥ;
Bībhatsādbhuta-sañjñau cet
aṣṭau nāṭye rasāḥ smṛtāḥ.
 There are eight *rasas* in dramaturgy: love (*śṛṅgāra*), delight (*hāsyā*), pity (*karuṇā*), dread or anger (*raudra*), heroic (*vīra*), fear (*bhayānakā*), ghastly (*bībhatsa*), and surprise (*adbhuta*).²

A drama or a cinema or a TV serial (hereafter, show) is called absolutely perfect if it contains all these sentiments in it. Suppose a show contains all these sentiments. The show is going on too. But there are no viewers. Then, all these *rasas* are of no use. If, on the other hand, the hall is full of wooden puppets, again the show is of no use. That means there should be viewers. This alone is not enough. Suppose you show a movie on how an atomic reactor is constructed, how it functions, etc in all detail to some lunatics of an asylum. You can imagine the result.

So just as we expect a show to be a masterpiece of art, the show also expects something from the viewers. It expects some permanent moods from viewers. These permanent moods are called *sthāyī bhāvas* in Sanskrit, and Sage Bharata says this about them:

रतिर्हासश्च शोकश्च क्रोधोत्साहो भयं तथा ।
 जुगुप्सा विस्मयश्चेति स्थायीभावाः प्रकीर्तिताः ॥
Ratir-hāsaśca śokaśca
krodhotsāho bhayaṁ tatha;
Jugupsā vismayaśceti
sthāyībhāvāḥ prakīrtitāḥ.

The permanent moods of love, joy, pain, anger, enthusiasm, fear, hatred, and surprise are

called *sthāyībhāvas*.³

Art expects these *sthāyī bhāvas* from the viewers. Then there are causes that bring out the respective moods (*vibhāvas*), effects that these moods produce in viewers (*anubhāvas*), and aids to further development of the moods (*sañcārī* and *vyabhicārī bhāvas*, called *sahakārī*).

The Process of Viewing

Everyone of us have the eight basic moods mentioned above in us: we all have love, joy, etc within. When we see a show, the right moods come up at the right moment, and so we enjoy viewing it.

Suppose we are seeing a drama on the *Rāmāyaṇa*. Rāma is shown there, searching for Sītā. The whole of Rāma's mind is on Sītā. So Sītā becomes the 'ground' or 'base' of Rāma's love. This 'ground' is called *ālambana vibhāva* in Sanskrit. Rāma now sees the full moon, the river Sarayū, and the birds singing. His love and concern for Sītā increases by leaps and bounds because of such instigators or inciters. These inciters, therefore, become the *uddipana vibhāvas* or 'inspirers' of love.

In this way, Sītā has caused the love sentiment (*rati*) in Rāma to awaken. There was *rati* in Rāma, and it awakens now. But it will not end there. There are changes in Rāma's person. Maybe his heart begins to beat fast, maybe his breath becomes heavy, maybe he begins to shed tears. Such things are called manifestations of love, *anubhāvas*. Will it end there? Rāma becomes anxious to release Sītā from the hold of Rāvaṇa. He shivers at the thought of the delay being caused. All these are called 'helps' or *sahakārīs* to the increase of love. Because of these *anubhāvas* and *sahakārīs*, Rāma's love for Sītā becomes a permanent mood, and all other thoughts take a back seat now. This permanent mood is *rasa*. The mood which wells up in Rāma's case is *śṛṅgāra rasa*.

The drama continues now. You will see Rāvaṇa in Laṅkā. He hears that Rāma is on the seashore, ready to attack him. The very thought of Rāma arouses terrible anger in

Rāvaṇa's heart. This is the *sthāyi bhāva* called *raudra*, anger. Rāma is the ground of Rāvaṇa's anger, and so Rāma is the *ālambana vibhāva*. Meanwhile, his ministers come and report that Rāma's army is huge, and they are powerful etc. These words fuel Rāvaṇa's anger further. His thought that Sītā will perhaps be lost to him adds to it. These are *uddipana vibhāvas*, inspirers of anger. Viewers can see the way Rāvaṇa begins to snort and hiss. We can see him shaking with anger. These are manifestations of anger, *anubhāvas*. 'Can't we restrain this puny human creature called Rāma?' thinks Rāvaṇa and shouts at his ministers. He wants them to get ready. All these are called *sahakāris* or helps. Thus the mood of anger (*raudra rasa*) has become fully manifest in Rāvaṇa now.

The Effect on Viewers

You may ask: 'What if Rāma develops *śṛṅgāra rasa* or Rāvaṇa develops *raudra rasa*? What's that to us who are seeing the drama?' It's this point we are discussing now. The moment we see Rāma's love for Sītā, we remark: 'The actor is performing very well.' We too may shed tears with Rāma, think of Sītā's sorrows with him, and feel for him. When it comes to Rāvaṇa, viewers may feel either terrified at his anger, or become angry with that villain for his treachery. Such sentiments that are seen in us are called *rasa*. Though this is a general way of saying things, each one of them—the cause, effect, inspirers, etc—can awaken *rasa* in us of their own. It's a technical process, simplified above. But the most essential thing is involvement of the viewer in the play. The actor and the viewer must become one. Only then can *rasa* be experienced fully.

The aim of a drama or cinema or a TV serial, therefore, is to arouse the permanent sentiment, *rasa*, in the viewers. Each show has some important element in it: like *śṛṅgāra*, *bibhatsa*, etc. Ancient Greek dramas, for example, were all tragedies. Such shows arouse the respective permanent sentiment in the viewers, and when we experience such *rasas*, the drama is a success.

One important point: Whatever the manifestation of *rasa*, the final result is bliss: we enjoy viewing the drama. It may be a horror story and the *rasa* that's awakened in us may be *bibhatsa rasa*, but still we truly 'enjoy' the drama. How do we 'enjoy' dramas that arouse painful sentiments like *karuṇa* or *bibhatsa*? If such sentiments too did not bring 'joy' to us, we would never go to see them, would we? Does anyone like to suffer by paying money? So all *rasas* finally produce bliss. *Rasa* 'melts' our mind, as it were. It transforms us. It brings unalloyed bliss. Why is it so? Because the Vedas declare that God is *rasa* itself, '*raso vai sah*.' 'On attaining that *rasa*, one becomes blissful, *rasam hi evāyaṁ labdhvā ānandi bhavati*.'⁴ So *rasa* or bliss is nothing but God or Brahman Itself. Through tears, joy, sorrow, etc, we finally manifest real bliss only.

The Mind of the Viewers

When we see a show, we experience *rasa* or bliss to the extent we are prepared. Most plays or movies fail to awaken such sentiments in us because (a) they are poor in spirit, (b) the viewers' minds are not ready due to restlessness, and/or (c) almost all modern dramas, movies, etc have worldly themes. The grander the theme, the grander the emotion. Therefore, the first precondition is that the show should be spiritual in content, and the viewer, called *sāmājika* in dramaturgy, should be eager to experience *rasa*. The effect of such eagerness is, there will be no difference between the actor and the viewer. Both will be immersed in the ocean of bliss. When we totally identify ourselves with the play, our minds become one-pointed and we experience bliss. When we become totally identified in this way, we forget the actor and feel it's all real. We don't think some actor is playing the role of Rāma, for instance. We shall be, like Karim of our incident, absolutely sure that it is Rāma himself who is suffering for Sītā.

Total Identification is Possible

Is such an identification possible? Look at

4. *Taittiriya Upaniṣad*, 2.7.1.

Sri Ramakrishna! He said once: 'One day I witnessed a Rāmlīlā performance. I saw the performers to be the actual Sītā, Rāma, Lakshmana, Hanumān, and Vibhishana.'⁵ When we read the chapter titled 'At the Star Theatre (I)' in *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, we see how Sri Ramakrishna would go into samadhi and would be overpowered with divine ecstasy very often during the enactment of the play *Chaitanyalīlā*. We read:

Sri Ramakrishna looked at M. He was eager to say something but he could not. His voice was choked with emotion; tears ran down the cheeks; with unmoving eyes he watched Nimāi clinging to Śrīvās's feet and saying, "Sir, I have not yet attained devotion to Krishna."⁶

When the play ended, and he was entering a carriage, someone asked him how he had enjoyed the play. The grand remark of Sri Ramakrishna said everything: 'I found the representation the same as the real.'⁷

So even in viewing shows also we have so much to learn from Sri Ramakrishna. When he went for a second time to the Star Theatre to see the play *Prahlāda*, Girish Chandra Ghosh asked him: 'How did you like the performance?' Sri Ramakrishna replied: 'I found that it was God Himself who was acting the different parts. Those who played the female parts seemed to me the direct embodiments of the Blissful Mother and the cowherd boys of Goloka the embodiments of Nārāyana Himself. It was God alone who had become all this.'⁸

Sri Ramakrishna despised worldly themes. When Girish said that a drama called *The Confusion of Marriage* would be enacted after *Prahlāda*, Sri Ramakrishna remarked: 'What have you done? This farce after the life of Prahlāda!'⁹

The Real Drama

What is true of ordinary drama is also true of the universal or cosmic drama that's going on all around us. In this universal drama, there are Rāmas and Rāvaṇas, Sītās and Mantharās, Kaikeyīs and Śūrpaṇakhās. Dramas are teachers! We should 'witness' the drama without becoming actors and actresses. Then we shall develop *vairāgya* when someone dies or a leaf falls, understand God's love for creation when a baby is born or a new leaf appears, and think how beautiful God should be when we see his beautiful creation. Everything that happens here can transport a spiritual seeker to the divine realm.

This so-called '*māyā jagat*' is, after all, not despicable. We are taught by Sri Ramakrishna to see God in and through this *jagat*. The *Īśa Upaniṣad* teaches us to envelop everything in God; Ramakrishna demonstrates it practically. The world is brimming with spiritual consciousness, as Ramakrishna experienced day and night. It's like going back to the Vedic period, the *Satya Yuga*, once again: the Vedic sages saw God in everything and everyone. Thunder, lightning, rivers, air, everything appeared personified as different deities to them. Sri Ramakrishna has brought that ideal back once again. Just as we must learn to see the representations as the real in a show, we must also see the 'Real' behind the 'representations' in the world, says Sri Ramakrishna. This is called seeing Śiva in *jīvas*. This is called the worship of the *virāj*.

Sri Ramakrishna says: 'I realize that wherever I live I am always in the Ayodhyā of Rāma. This whole world is Rāma's Ayodhyā.'¹⁰ Sri Ramakrishna saw God's play in everything and in everyone. He did not ignore the fallen and the downtrodden: he saw the Divine Mother Herself even in women of bad character!

How Different Schools View the World

A person of knowledge (*jñāni*) despises

5. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1985), p. 231. [Hereafter, *Gospel*.]

6. *Gospel*, p. 554.

7. *Gospel*, p. 556.

8. *Gospel*, p. 678.

9. *Gospel*, p. 683.

10. *Gospel*, p. 648.

anything that is not Brahman and goes for the Real alone. To him this world appears as a dream or a superimposition (*adhyāsa*). A yogi thinks he is bound to the world by his actions and wants to work them out through concentration. To the *bhakta*, this world is God's sport (*līlā*), though he cares for God alone and shuns evil company scrupulously. Says Sri Ramakrishna:

There are two schools of thought: the Vedānta and the Purāṇa. According to the Vedānta this world is a 'framework of illusion', that is to say, it is all illusory, like a dream. But according to the Purāṇa, the books of devotion, God Himself has become the twenty-four cosmic principles. Worship God both within and without. ... Hence the Bhakti scriptures describe this very world as a "mansion of mirth".¹¹

Sri Ramakrishna transcended all limitations and saw God in everything and everyone. He says, for instance:

One day I saw a woman in blue standing near the bakul-tree. She...instantly kindled in me the vision of Sitā. I forgot the woman. I saw that it was Sitā herself on her way to meet Rāma after her rescue from Rāvana in Ceylon. ... Another day I had gone to the Maidān in Calcutta for fresh air. A great crowd had assembled there to watch a balloon ascension. Suddenly I saw an English boy leaning against a tree. As he stood there his body was bent in three places. The vision of Krishna came before me in a flash. I went into samādhi.¹²

As he himself remarked, 'Even the slightest suggestion would awaken my spiritual consciousness.'¹³ There are countless instances where Sri Ramakrishna saw God in very ordinary things and people and went into samadhi. A simple sound would awaken in him the memory of the flute of Kṛṣṇa, and he would be transported into a different world.

Corollaries of Such Transcendental Visions

In this way, Sri Ramakrishna appears to

have modified our outlook towards the world, of course, at a higher stage. He does not seem to call upon us to hate the world or call it *māyā*. He asks us to observe God's play behind it. The compiler of the *Gospel*, M. says once that the *jñānis* feel that when the pillow-case called this body drops off, they are free because the body alone is the cause of all mischief. Sri Ramakrishna immediately retorts:

Why should you say such things? This world may be a 'framework of illusion', but it is also said that it is a 'mansion of mirth'. Let the body remain. One can also turn this world into a mansion of mirth.¹⁴ ... He who has realized God knows that God Himself has become the world and all living beings.¹⁵

Who is a true devotee according to him? 'A bhakta sees that God alone has become the twenty-four cosmic principles, the universe, and all living beings.'¹⁶

Who, next, is a true karma yogi? He who works as an instrument of God and serves everyone considering them as the manifestations of God or Śiva is a true karma yogi.

And who is a true raja yogi? He who can meditate on God with 'open eyes' is a true raja yogi. Secondly, the body was usually considered by the devotee and the *jñāni* as despicable. Sri Ramakrishna has added a new dimension to this by giving importance to the body. He has said:

Since my arm was injured a deep change has come over me. I now delight only in the Nara Līlā, the human manifestation of God. Nitya and Līlā. The Nitya is the Indivisible Satchidānanda, and the Līlā, or Sport, takes various forms, such as the Līlā as God, Līlā as the deities, the Līlā as man, and the Līlā as the universe. ... It is God Himself who is sporting in the form of man.¹⁷

The human being, represented here as 'man' (though the correct term for *mānuṣ* is

11. *Gospel*, p. 243.

12. *Gospel*, p. 231.

13. *Gospel*, p. 231.

14. *Gospel*, p. 298.

15. *Gospel*, p. 326.

16. *Gospel*, p. 700.

17. *Gospel*, p. 392.

'human being'), is not an ordinary thing to be ignored anymore. Sri Ramakrishna has thus raised the dignity of the human being in the spiritual world also.

Thirdly, the organs of knowledge—hearing, seeing, etc—become important because they take us to God. Ramakrishna seems to have initiated a new path by teaching humanity to see God with 'eyes open'. Earlier, *indriya nigraha* or control of the senses was a big issue in spiritual life.

The Cosmic Play is Useful

Sri Ramakrishna has shown that this cosmic drama is going on to remind us of the real Player behind the play. Just as in a drama on *Rāmāyaṇa* we are supposed to see the real Rāma and real Sītā, in this cosmic drama also we are to see the supreme Lord Himself. This world should remind us every moment of the Lord. How could this happen?

The *jñānis* say that God is the creator, preserver, and destroyer of the universe (*janmādyasya yataḥ* — *Brahma Sūtras*, 1.1.2). We imagine that God creates this world like a ball, keeps it for some time, and breaks it. This may be true. But we can perhaps visualize creation etc going on every moment. Our own body is changing. The tree in front of us sheds old leaves and acquires new ones. This destruction, shedding of old leaves, invokes *vairāgya*. Each new leaf brings hope in the heart of the seeker that God loves creation and provides fresh energy to it. So every moment we can see creation, preservation, and destruction going on in the world, called *jagat*. Behind this eternal creation and destruction is the Divine Mother or Brahman.

The devotees have a method of utilizing the cosmic play called the world. They have taken up ideas from *nāṭya śāstra*, and have added to the richness of devotional literature by saying that just as literary excellences awaken sentiments, bhakti also awakens sentiments in us. Just as in drama and rhetoric we have *rasa*, in the devotional path too there is *rasa*. The devotees, especially Caitanyites like Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, have systematized devotional sentiments and have composed wonderful works about how each sentiment in us can be developed into an aspect of devotion. Worldly relationships can be transmuted into divine relationships. Our love for father, mother, sister, brother, etc can be directed towards God and we can have similar relationships with Him. Sri Ramakrishna advises a devotee to look upon the near one whom she loves dearly as God Himself. This will help her grow speedily along the devotional path, he adds. So this objective cosmic drama can be personalized as devotional sentiment, and we can enjoy *rasa* to its fullest extent.

Gradually, as the devotee grows in devotion, he begins to feel that it is his dear God Himself who has become the virtuous and the wicked, the tree and the plant, the water and the river, everything. This is what Sri Ramakrishna showed us through his life. What is going on around us is a semblance according to Advaita; but behind it is the Real. The *vijñāni* sees that the many and the One are the same Reality. Sri Ramakrishna taught us how to go from the semblance to the Real, just as he taught us to go from the drama to the real, from the 'representation to the real.' □

'God dwells in all beings. He is the gold in all. In some places it is more clearly manifest than in others. God dwells in the worldly-minded, no doubt, but He is hidden there, like gold under deep layers of clay. ... The world and all living beings have been created by His will,' says Sri Ramakrishna.

IMAGES OF INDIA'S PAST

A Scholar's Opinion of a Sanskrit Drama

An English translation of Śūdraka's *Mṛccha-kaṭikā* was staged in New York in 1924. Mr Joseph Wood Krutch, the dramatic critic of the *Nation*, wrote of it as follows: 'Here, if anywhere, the spectator will be able to see a genuine example of that "pure art theatre" of which theorists talk, and here, too, he will be led to meditate upon that real wisdom of the East which lies not in esoteric doctrine but in a tenderness far deeper and truer than that of the traditional Christianity which has been so thoroughly corrupted by the hard righteousness of Hebraism. ... A play wholly artificial yet profoundly moving because it is not realistic but real. ... Whoever the author may have been, and whether he lived in the fourth century or the eighth, he was a man good and wise with the goodness and wisdom which come not from the lips or the smoothly flowing pen of the moralist but from the heart. ... Such a play can be produced only by a civilization which has reached stability; when a civilization has thought its way through all the problems it faces, it must come to rest upon something calm and naive like this. Macbeth and Othello, however great and stirring they might be, are barbarous heroes because the passionate tumult of Shakespeare is the tumult produced by the conflict inherited from the savage age. The realistic drama of our own time is a product of a like confusion; but when problems are settled, and when passions are reconciled with the decisions of an intellect, then form alone remains. ... Nowhere in our European past do we find, this side the classics, a work more completely civilized.' [Cf. Jawaharlal Nehru, *The Discovery of India* (Calcutta: Signet Press, 1946), pp. 181-2.]

Position of Women

In *The Chronicle of Nuniz* (p. 382), Robert Sewell writes that the Portugese chronicler Nuniz saw the position of women to be better in the Vijayanagara empire, Karnataka, during the 16th century. There were women wrestlers, astrologers, and soothsayers. The kings of those days had in their service women who wrote all accounts of expenses that were incurred inside the gates of the palace. He also speaks of another female clerical staff, whose duty was to record all the affairs of the kingdom and compare their books with those of outside writers. Thus, besides being accomplished artistes, musicians, etc, women were well-educated.

Are Purāṇas Mere Stories?

Scholars had *decided* that the Purāṇas are mere stories, until Col. Speke discovered the course of the Nile in Nubia (Kuśadvīpa) after reading the Purāṇas. He said: 'The ancient Hindus must have had some kind of communication with both the northern and southern ends of Victoria Nyaza of Egypt.' This confirmation of the Purāṇic statement by actual discovery turned the tide in favour of the Purāṇas. (Dr A.D. Pusalker, 'The Historical Literature of the Ancient Indians' in *The Indo-Asian Culture*, October 1956).

In a Ruined Chapel

OLIVE SCHREINER

Here's a Christmas present. Olive Schreiner's full name was Olive Emilie Albertina Schreiner. Her pseudonym was Ralph Iron. She was born in Wittebergen, South Africa. Schreiner was a crusader, a pioneer in the Women's Movement, and a writer of great repute though she had no formal education. Her Story of an African Farm was the first novel to be written by any South African. We publish extracts from her Dreams. Schreiner passed away on 11 December 1920.

There are four bare walls; there is a Christ upon the walls, in red, carrying His cross; there is a blessed Bambino with the face rubbed out; there is a Madonna in blue and red; there are Roman soldiers, and a Christ with tied hands. All the roof is gone; overhead is the blue, blue Italian sky; the rain has beaten holes in the walls, and the plaster is peeling from it. The chapel stands here alone upon the promontory, and by day and by night, the sea

breaks at its feet. Some say that it was set here by the monks from the island down below, that they might bring their sick here in times of deadly plague. Some say that it was set here so

that the passing monks and friars, as they hurried by upon the roadway, might stop and say their prayers here. Now no one stops to pray here, and the sick come no more to be healed.

Behind it runs the old Roman road. If you climb it, and come and sit there alone on a hot, sunny day, you may almost hear at last the clink of the Roman soldiers upon the pavement, and the sound of that older time, as you sit there in the sun, when Hannibal and his men broke through the brushwood as no road

was.

Now it is very quiet. Sometimes a peasant girl comes riding by between her panniers, and you hear the mule's feet beat upon the bricks of the pavement; sometimes an old woman goes past with a bundle of weeds upon her head, or a brigand-looking man hurries by with a bundle of sticks in his hand; but for the rest, the chapel lies here alone upon the promontory, between the two bays, and hears

the sea break at its feet.

I came here one winter's day when the midday sun shone hot on the bricks of the Roman road. I was weary, and the way seemed steep. I walked into the chapel

to the broken window, and looked out across the bay. Far off, across the blue, blue water, were towns and villages, hanging white and red dots, upon the mountain-sides; and the blue mountains rose up into the sky, and now stood out from it, and now melted back again.

The mountains seemed calling to me, but I knew there would never be a bridge built from them to me; never, never, never! I shaded my eyes with my hand and turned away. I could not bear to look at them.



I walked through the ruined chapel, and looked at the Christ in red, carrying His cross, and the blessed rubbed-out Bambino, and the Roman soldiers, and the folded hands, and the reed; and I went and sat down in the open porch upon a stone. At my feet was the small bay, with its white row of houses buried among the olive trees; the water broke in a long, thin, white line of foam along the shore; and I leaned my elbows on my knees. I was tired, very tired; tired with a tiredness that seemed older than the heat of the day and the shining of the sun on the bricks of the Roman road; and I lay my head upon my knees; I heard the breaking of the water on the rocks three hundred feet below, and the rustling of the wind among the olive trees and the ruined arches; and then I fell asleep there. I had a dream.

A man cried up to God, and God sent down an angel to help him; and the angel came back and said, 'I cannot help that man.'

God said: 'How is it with him?'

And the angel said, 'He cries out continually that one has injured him; and he would forgive him, and he cannot.'

God said, 'What have you done for him?'

The angel said: 'All. ... I took him by the hand, and I said, "See, when other men speak ill of that man, do you speak well of him. Secretly, in ways he shall not know, serve him. If you have anything you value, share it with him. So, serving him, you will at last come to feel possession in him, and you will forgive." And he said: "I will do it." Afterwards, as I passed by in the dark of night, I heard one cry-

ing out: "I have done all. It helps nothing! If I share my heart's blood with him, is the burning within me less? I cannot forgive! Oh, God, I cannot forgive!"

'I said to him, "See here, look back on all your past. See from your childhood all smallness, all indirectness that has been yours; look well at it, and in its light do you not see every man your brother? Are you so sinless you have right to hate?"

'He looked and said: "Yes, you are right. I



too have failed, and I forgive my fellow. Go, I am satisfied. I have forgiven." And he laid him down peacefully and folded his hands on his breast, and I thought it was well with him. But scarcely had my wings rustled, and I turned to come up here, when I heard one crying out on earth again: "I cannot forgive! I cannot forgive! Oh, God, God, I cannot forgive! It is better to die than to hate! I cannot forgive! I cannot forgive!" And I went and stood outside his door in the dark, and I heard him cry: "I have not sinned so, not so! If I have torn my fellow's flesh ever so little, I have

kneeled down and kissed the wound with my mouth till it was healed. I have not willed that any soul should be lost through hate of me. If they have but fancied that I wronged them, I have lain down on the ground before them that they might tread on me, and so, seeing my humiliation, forgive, and not be lost through hating me; they have not cared that my soul should be lost; they have not willed to save me; they have not tried that I should forgive them!"

'I said: "See here, be thou content; do *not*

forgive; forget this soul and its injury; go on your way. In the next world perhaps..."

'He cried: "Go from me; you understand nothing! What is the next world to me! I am lost now, today. I cannot see the sunlight shine, the dust is in my throat, the sand is in my eyes! Go from me; you know nothing! Oh, once again before I die to see that the world is beautiful! Oh, God, God, God!" So I left him crying out, and came back here.'

God said: 'This man's soul must be saved.' And the angel said: 'How?'

Then God bent down and whispered in the angel's ear, and the angel spread out its wings and went down to earth.

The angel went down and found the man with the bitter heart, and took him by the hand, and led him to a certain spot.

Now the man knew not where it was the angel would take him, nor what he would show him there. And when they came, the angel shaded the man's eyes with his wing, and when he moved it, the man saw somewhat on the earth before them. For God had given it to that angel to unclothe a human soul; to take from it all those outward attributes of form, and colour, and age, and sex, whereby one man is known from among his fellows, and is marked off from the rest. The soul lay bare before them, bare, as a man turning his eye inward beholds himself.

They saw its past, its childhood, the tiny life with the dew upon it; they saw its youth when the dew was melting, and the creature raised its Lilliputian mouth to drink from a cup too large for it, and they saw how the water spilt; they saw its hopes that were never realized; they saw its hours of intellectual blindness men call sin; they saw its hours of all-radiating insight, which men call righteousness; they saw its hour of strength, when it leaped to its feet crying, "I am omnipotent"; its hour of weakness, when it fell to the earth and

grasped dust only; they saw what it might have been, but never would be.

The man bent forward. And the angel said: 'What is it?'

He answered: 'It is I! It is myself!'

And he went forward as if he would have lain his heart against it; but the angel held him back, and covered his eyes.

Now God had given power to the angel further to unclothe that soul, to take from it all those outward attributes of time, and place, and circumstance whereby the individual life is marked off from the life of the whole.

Again the angel uncovered the man's eyes, and he looked. He saw before him that which in its tiny drop reflects the whole universe; he saw that which marks within itself the step of the furthest star, and tells how the crystal grows underground where no eye has seen it; that which is where the germ in the egg stirs; which moves the outstretched fingers of the little newborn babe, and keeps the leaves of the trees pointing upward; which moves where the jellyfish sail alone on the sunny seas, and is where the lichens form on the mountain rocks.

And the man looked. And the angel touched him. But the man bowed his head and shuddered. He whispered: 'It is God.'

And the angel re-covered the man's eyes. And when he uncovered them, there was one walking from them a little way off; for the angel had re-clothed the soul in its outward form and vesture—and the man knew who it was.

And the angel said: 'Do you know him?' The man said: 'I know him,' and he looked after the figure. And the angel said: 'Have you forgiven him?' But the man said: 'How beautiful my brother is!' And the angel looked into the man's eyes. He shaded his own face with his wing from the light. He laughed softly, and went up to God.

But the men were together on earth. □

Takṣaśilā

DEBALA MITRA & NARESH CHANDRA SENGUPTA

This article has been prepared using several sources, of which the lengthy five-part article in Bengali by Naresh Chandra Sengupta in the now defunct Bharatavarsha (1333 BE) and 'Places of Buddhist Pilgrimage' by Debala Mitra in The Indo-Asian Culture (October 1954) are important. Please read the history of a great seat of learning and Buddhism.

There are several names for Takṣaśilā, found in ancient books. The meaning of Takṣaśilā is 'carved stone' according to Dr Wilson, 'carved-stone city' according to Sir John Marshall, and 'the hill of Takṣaka, the



Taxila image: Buddha offering benediction

king of serpents'. The Pāli name given to this place is Takkaśilā. Takṣaśilā appears in the *Rāmāyaṇa* also, when Bharata names the city as 'Takkhaśilā' in honour of his son, Takkha. There is also a story that Bhagavān Buddha had offered his own head to somebody in one of his earlier births in this place, and so its name in the Buddhist works is 'Takṣa-śira'. The Chinese traveller Fa-hsien had called it Cu-ṣa-ṣi-lo, 'the severed head'. The Greek name is Taxila. Takṣaśilā is now near the hilly terrain of Golra, 35 km northwest of

Rawalpindi, Pakistan.

'The foundation of the earliest city goes back to a very remote age, at least to the second, if not the third, millennium before our era,' wrote Sir John Marshall in *The Annual Report of the Director General of Archaeology*, 1912. The antiquity, as we said above, says that it was known during the *Rāmāyaṇa* age also. According to the *Mahābhārata*, King Janamejaya had arranged for a huge snake sacrifice after conquering Takṣaśilā. The story is, when King Parikṣit had lost his way during a hunting expedition, he met a sage and asked him the way. The sage couldn't reply because he was in samadhi. Enraged, Parikṣit placed a dead snake round the sage's neck and went away. The sage's son cursed Parikṣit that within a week the king would be bitten by Takṣaka, king of the snakes. Parikṣit died on the appointed day. According to 'The History and Culture of the Indian People' (Vol. 1, *The Vedic Age*, p. 320), this mythical story appears to suggest a genuine historical fact. The rise of the Nāgas in Gāndhāra (Taxila was the capital of Gāndhāra) was taking place during this period. Taking advantage of the weakening Pauravas, Takṣaka, the king of Nāgas, marched against Hastināpura and killed Parikṣit. To avenge his father's death, Parikṣit's son Janamejaya invaded Takṣaśilā and slaughtered countless Nāgas. This act has been mythologized into the *sarpa-satra* (snake-sacrifice) of Janamejaya. The entire *Mahābhārata* was recited to Janamejaya at Takṣaśilā by Vaiśampāyana.

In the *Vāyu Purāṇa*, Takṣaśilā has been



A Buddha head from Taxila

described as a beautiful city. Even in other Purāṇas like the *Agni*, we find mention of this great city. These instances apart, we find Pāṇini, *Raghu-vaṃśa*, *Br̥hat Saṃhitā*, *Kathāsaritsāgara*, and other scholars and works men-

tioning Takṣaśilā.

From about the 6th century BC to more than 10 centuries thereafter, Takṣaśilā (hereafter, Taxila) was well known as a great educational centre. Students from all over India and abroad would assemble here to receive training in various arts. Of the countries that would send their students, China, Russia, Babylon, Syria, Arabia, Tibet, etc are important. It is said that the three Vedas, *Ṛg*, *Yajus* and *Sāma* were taught here. Apart from these, there were teachers to teach 18 arts. Amongst its illustrious students, mention may be made of the great political scientist Cāṇakya, the well-known grammarian Pāṇini, the great propounder of yoga, Patañjali, and others.

In the Buddhist scriptures, the name of Taxila comes repeatedly. According to the *Vinaya Piṭaka*, King Bimbisāra's doctor, Jivaka, was a medical practitioner in Taxila, and had specialized in surgery. The king of Kosala, Pasenadi (Pāli; Sanskrit, Prasenajit), had studied in Taxila. The lecturers and professors of Taxila were all famous for their capabilities and learning.

There were two classes of students in Taxila: one class could afford to pay and the other couldn't. Students belonging to this second class would, instead of

money, serve their teachers during the day and study at night. Punishments to students were physical in nature. Teaching was of a very high calibre.

In his *Guide to Taxila*, Sir John Marshall writes so many things that appear to be more fiction than fact. However, he can't be blamed because he was tied down by lack of proper evidences. It is said that either during the late 6th or the early 5th century BC, the Achaemenians (Persians) under Darius I occupied Gāndhāra, Sindhu, Punjab and other areas and ruled for a century. Herodotus mentions this rule clearly, saying that Taxila was a 'wealthy, prosperous and well-governed' city. Till how long that belt was under the Persians is not known, but at least in 326 BC, Alexander occupied the land. During this time, a Hindu king by name Āmbhi (Greek, Omphis) was ruling over Taxila.

When Alexander attacked the Sindhu area, Āmbhi was worried about the growing prowess of his rival, Porus (Paurava). The moment Alexander set foot, Āmbhi surrendered to him, thinking that he would help him defeat Porus. He even gave Alexander a golden crown among other things. The master politician Alexander returned all his gifts to Āmbhi, and also gave him many things from his own treasury. All he wanted were some 5,000 able Asian soldiers to fight Porus. He got that. The rest is history.

Taxila was well known for its monks and



Alexander waging war: A sacrophagus



A king's image from Taxila;
perhaps a Bodhisattva

imense valour and captured Sindhu, Punjab, and almost all of the northern parts up to the Hindu Kush. Seleucus Nicator, Alexander's general, captured much of Asia and reinstated the Macedonian Empire. But he was defeated

mendicants, scholars and literati in those days. Alexander's companions enjoyed discussing philosophy with some of the Taxila monks. Several Greek philosophers are said to have visited Taxila, among whom Apollonius of Tyana (1st century BC) is well known.

After some years, probably around 300 BC, the great Magadhan hero, Chandragupta, displayed im-

ense valour and captured Sindhu, Punjab, and almost all of the northern parts up to the Hindu Kush. Seleucus Nicator, Alexander's general, captured much of Asia and reinstated the Macedonian Empire. But he was defeated in a battle in 305 BC against Chandragupta (Greek, Sandracottus) and retired to Greece. But before that, he gave his daughter in marriage to Chandragupta. The latter sent away Celucus with a large number of ele-

phants (a rarity in Greece) and much wealth. Megasthenes remained as a royal ambassador in Chandragupta's court, giving the first ever account of those days. During all these years, Taxila was the capital of a large part of north-western India. Chandragupta was powerful, but towards the end of his life he became a Jaina monk and fasted unto death at the Shravana Belgola Jaina temple near Mysore.

Though no uprising could be possible during Chandragupta's rule, during Bimbisāra's rule (298-273 BC), there was a great uprising in Taxila. To suppress this, Aśoka was appointed by Bimbisāra. Aśoka won the hearts of Taxilians by his wonderful behaviour and rule. Aśoka ascended the throne of the Mauryan empire in 273 BC. He spread Buddhism far and wide. When he passed away in 231 BC, there was anarchy, and Taxila declared independence. Later, the ever eager Greek kings from Bactria occupied Taxila for some time. The Śakas (Scythians), an uncivilized people from Central Asia, came and usurped Bactria first, then invaded different parts of larger India, and slowly penetrated into Taxila. Then came the Parthians, who ruled up to the 1st century BC. After some movements in history, there appeared the Kuśānas. It was the beginning of the first mil-

lennium AD when the Kuśānas, coming from the northern parts of China, conquered parts of Kabul, the Hindu Kush, Bactria, and Taxila. The Kuśāna king Kaniška built Puruṣapura (Peshawar) and made it capital of his empire, thus subduing the glory of Taxila. By this time, Taxila had earned world-wide fame as the greatest seat of Buddhist learning. During the 3rd century, the Sāsānians occupied Taxila.

Fa-hsien visited Taxila around 400 AD and saw a



Copper
representation of
the three wheels of
Buddhism



A Greek image from Sirkap, Taxila

number of great Buddhist monuments there. He calls Taxila a glorious Buddhist capital. Unfortunately for us, he did not leave any record at all. A century later, the Huns conquered those parts. These uncivilized people destroyed all the important buildings of Taxila without giving any thought to decency. That was the end of the glorious period of Taxila. When Hsuan Tsang visited that once-great city, Taxila was only a small town under the Kashmir king, and it had lost all its earlier glory.

This much for the history of Taxila. Sir Alexander Cunningham discovered the ruins of Taxila. The importance of Taxila is the number of Buddhist stupas and ruins of monasteries. The ruins of Taxila were hidden under mounds and these mounds were among the most explored in pre-independent India, for apart from the activities of treasure-hunters and amateur archaeologists in the 19th century, they were systematically and extensively excavated for more than twenty years, beginning with 1912, by Sir John Marshall. Subsequently, further excavation was carried out under the supervision of Dr R.E.M. Wheeler in 1944-45 with the limited objective of ascertaining the stratigraphy of two of the sites.

The Taxila ruins consist of a large number of groups of Buddhist stupas and monasteries and three city-sites. The strategic position of Taxila as the meeting place of three important trade routes linking the interiors of India with Central and West Asia, coupled with its beautiful and picturesque situation in a fertile valley watered by rivulets and guarded by hills, explain the prosperity and prolonged occupation of the city, as also the fact of its being subjected to repeated invasions. Sometimes a new ruler would select a fresh spot for his capital in preference to the older one.

Bhir Mound was the name given to a group of mounds by Sir John Marshall. Its antiquity goes back to the pre-Mauryan period, i.e. to at least 5th century BC. The Bhir Mound consists of ancient wonders but lacks in systematic town-planning. The buildings were of

rubble masonry, in which *kanjūr* and limestone, finished with a coating of mud-plaster, were used. An interesting feature of the dwelling houses was the use of various types of soak-wells made of pottery rings or earthen storage jars with bottoms removed and set one above the other, or taking the shape of pits lined with masonry.

Sirkap was the city of the Greeks. The capital was shifted from Taxila to Sirkap. This city had been occupied successively by the Greeks, Scytho-Parthians and the Kuśānas. The fortification during the Indo-Greek period seems to have consisted of a mud-rampart, of which Kachchā Kot, an earthen ridge to the north of Sirkap, was probably a remnant. With the coming of the Śakas, who continued to occupy the city, a definite attempt was made to plan the city after the Hellenistic model. With this object in view they extended its southern boundary so as to include a part of the Hathiāl range to build an acropolis and delimited the northern extremity, thus to exclude the part between the new northern wall and Kachchā Kot.

It was obvious that the king responsible for planning the city not only selected an area conforming to the requirements of an ideal Hellenistic city, but also had a Hellenistic city in mind when he translated his plan into stone. Thus a considerable hilly area was comprised within the city which had a detached acropolis, and the layout of streets and houses followed the chessboard pattern which was the fashion among the Greeks at that time. A central street ran north-south bordered on either side by buildings with regularly aligned side-streets crossing it at right angles and thus dividing the city into rectangular blocks. In spite of the individual features, the houses followed the same general plan—an open court flanked or surrounded by chambers. Besides the older rubble masonry, a new type called diaper masonry came into existence. Though the buildings were mostly dwelling houses and shops, the city also comprised some religious establishments including an apsidal



Toilet trays discovered at Sirkap: They belonged to the Greeks

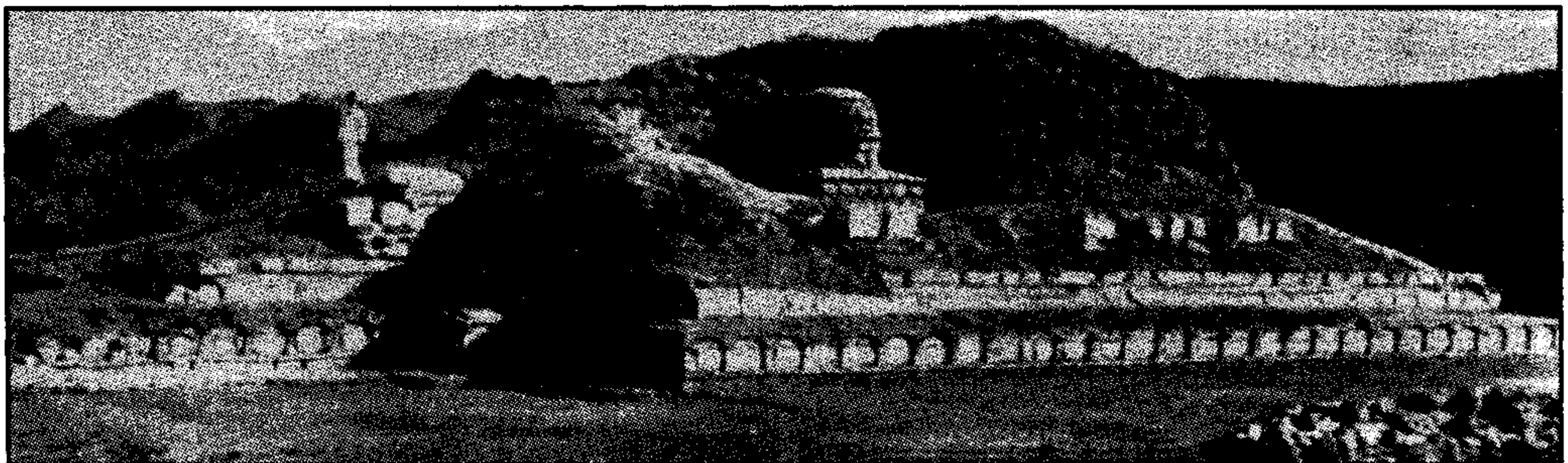
Buddhist temple and an edifice identified—by its dimensions and massiveness, its courts of public and private audience, women's quarters, and private chapel—as a secondary palace, the main palace being identified with Mahal on the ridges of the upper city. The general layout of the city remained virtually unaltered throughout the remaining part of the life of the city.

Another interesting religious structure was a stupa shrine, the front facade of which was decorated with Corinthian pilasters [a rectangular column which usually projects about a third of its width from the wall to which it is attached], the spaces in between being relieved with niches. On the top of four such niches were found the motif of eagles, one of them double-headed—a motif specially associated with the Scythians who inherited it from the older culture of West Asia.

The collection of precious antiquities from this site was even richer than that from

Bhir Mound and included gold and silver ornaments, silverware and thousands of coins. The yield of jewellery from accumulated hoards was not only considerable but also interesting, and offered material for the study of shape, design and workmanship. Found mostly in the Parthian levels, the ornaments give us a faithful idea about the art of jewellers satisfying the taste and demands of their West Asian clientele. The result was the emergence of peculiar ornament-types forming a class by themselves, which had very little in common with the contemporary or subsequent indigenous products of jewellers. Among other antiquities, a group of toilet trays of different kinds of stone were of great interest.

On the Hathiāl spur, inside the fortifications, were perched several Buddhist monuments. Of these the stupa of Kuṇāla is mentioned by Hsuan Tsang who believed that it was built by Aśoka to commemorate the spot where his son Kuṇāla was blinded by the



The Kuṇāla stupa

machinations of his queen and Kuṇāla's step-mother Tiṣyarakṣitā. The story goes that Aśoka, upon the insistence of his wife Tiṣyarakṣitā, sent away his son Kuṇāla to Taxila as an ambassador. After some time, Tiṣyarakṣitā wrote a false letter in Aśoka's name, and when the emperor was asleep, had an official seal stamped on the letter using his ivory stamp. In that letter were baseless accusations against Kuṇāla and that, because of his heinous crimes, Kuṇāla's eyes should be removed. Initially the ministers of Taxila did not at all agree to do such a thing to their dear lord. But Kuṇāla began to insist that, since it was his own father's order, it should be carried out. After the order was carried out, he along with his wife wandered here and there in search of a proper route to the capital and, after much difficulty, came to his father. His father recognized this blind, sickly, emaciated person as his son from his voice. The cruel and jealous wife was put to death for her heinous crime. Fortunately, there was a Buddhist mendicant in Buddha Gaya by name Ghoṣa, who restored Kuṇāla's eyesight. Since this event became famous, many blind people would come to this stupa and pray for restoration of eyesight.

In its present form, however, it could not be earlier than the 3rd or 4th century AD. It rested on a lofty rectangular plinth rising in three tiers and having a flight of steps at its northern end. On the top was a dentil cornice and copings. There were brackets of the

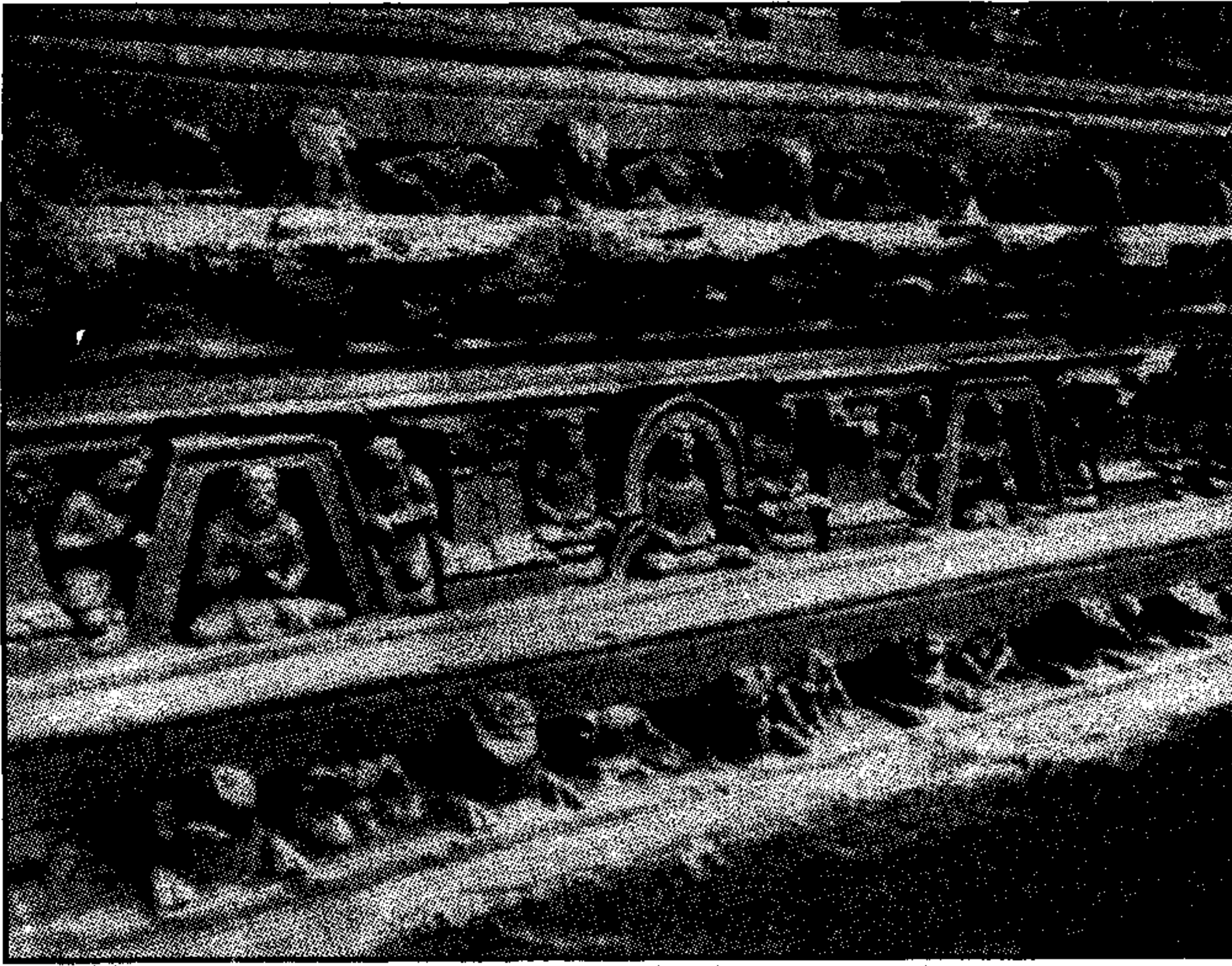
notched variety, reminding of Hindu art, on the outer sides. An interesting feature about this structure was that a small earlier stupa dating from the Scytho-Parthian times was found buried in the core of the later stupa near the northwest corner. Attached to the Kuṇāla stupa was a monastery built of semi-ashlar masonry and following the usual monastic plan in the form of the *catuḥśālā*—a central rectangular court encompassed by a raised veranda and cells. The remains of two other monasteries, more or less contemporary with the Kuṇāla monastery, were found near about, one of them situated at Gahi further up the hill, halfway between the Kuṇāla monastery and the southeast corner of the city.

Sirsukh is the last phase of Taxila. It is situated in the open valley about a mile to the north-northeast of Sirkap on the other side of the Lundī Nālā. In contrast to the irregular limits of the earlier cities, it was almost rectangular, fortified with a thick wall of diaper-faced rubble masonry, having semicircular bastions at intervals of 90 ft, both the wall and bastions being provided with loopholes.

The whole area outside these city-sites is strewn with Buddhist establishments, the most conspicuous of which is the Dharmarājikā stupa. The name Dharmarājikā associates the monument with Aśoka, but in its present form it dates from the Kuśāna period, though it is likely that its nucleus belonged to the ruins of an earlier one. It was circular in plan and hemispherical in elevation,

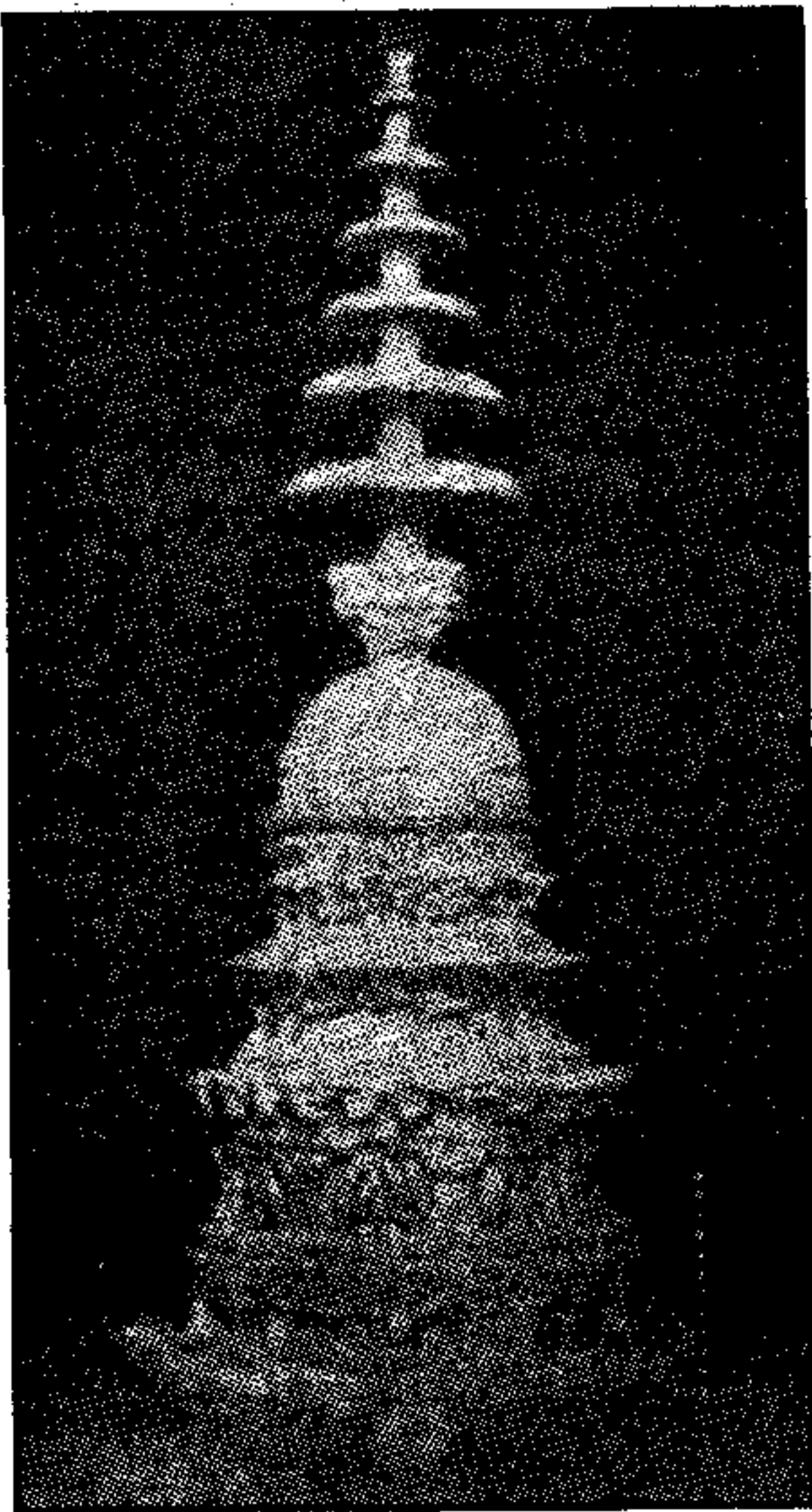


The Dharmarājikā stupa, Taxila



Stucco sculptures on a Taxila stupa

with a raised terrace round its base approached by four flights of steps at the cardinal points. The core was built of rough rubble strengthened by 16 walls radiating from the centre and veneered with huge limestone blocks with recessed *kanjūr* in between for the mouldings and pilasters, the whole being given a coating of lime plaster and paint. The



Morhā Morādu relic-casket

ornamental stonework on the base of the stupa drum above the berm, of the 4th or 5th century AD, consisted of niches divided from one another by Corinthian pilasters, originally containing

the figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas. The great stupa was surrounded by rings of small stupas and chapels, and adjoining it was a large monastery. There is evidence of the monastery having been rebuilt on more than one occasion, the existing remains belonging to the early medieval period.

About a mile to the southeast of the city of Sirsukh, near the village of Morhā Morādu, stands another interesting group of Buddhist establishments with its stupas and monasteries, built between the 3rd and 5th centuries. The two stupas discovered here were noted for the number of beautiful and well-preserved

stucco images and figures. The monastery with its court of cells, hall of assembly, refectory, kitchen, storeroom, etc was also remarkable for its spacious accommodation.

Less than a mile to the northeast of Morhā Morādu, near the village of Jauliān, are to be seen on the hilltop the remains of another group of stupas, monasteries and ancillary structures. The original fabric of the main stupa goes back to the Kuśāna age, though the present monastery with stucco decorations belongs to a later period. Just as in the case of the other stupas, here also we can find destruction rampant because of fortune-hunters. Among the subsidiary stupas round the main one, one contained a relic-casket in the form of a stupa, made of hard lime plaster and bedecked with gems. The stucco figures found here are all so lively and beautiful, and appear to come out of the clouds as it were, that we are transported to those times and feel immensely pained at the destruction done by senseless people. Each image, big or small, is made in such a way that it appears strong and healthy, and the folds of the clothing are so natural. At the bottom of this was found a wooden casket containing, among other things, a small round



Jauliān stucco image: A foreigner, perhaps Greek

casket of copper gilt. Inside the latter was a cylinder of the same material containing dark-coloured dust. Like Mohrā Morādu, Jauliān is noted for its beautiful stucco figures.

There is a

particular image standing to the southern side of the Buddha image, which is a strange figure. The image wears a tunic, a pyjama with buttons, a well-decorated belt, and a cap. This is certainly an image made by some foreigner. During the 5th century AD, a fire broke out in this area, destroying many artifacts. Numerous coins, a birchbark manuscript, and many other mud and copper utensils have been found here.

At Pippala, between Mohrā Morādu and Jauliān, can be seen the remains of a stupa and



Jauliān: A beautiful Buddha image

an attached monastery, belonging to two periods, the earlier one dating from the late Parthian or Kuśāna

times.

Apart from these Buddhist edifices, one unique temple with its Greek plan, Ionic columns and classical mouldings, but of uncertain religious affiliation, stands pre-eminent at Jandīāl. Architecturally it conforms to the peripteral Greek temple with a *pranaos* or front porch, a *naos* or sanctuary and an *opisthodomos* or back porch, surrounded on all sides by a peristyle of columns, with the difference that instead of the rows of columns, it is surrounded on three sides by a wall pierced at frequent intervals, while at the front there are four Ionic columns in two rows, and that there is a solid mass of masonry between the *naos* and *opisthodomos*, taking the place of an extra chamber found in some large Greek temples between the sanctuary and the back porch. The temple is constructed of limestone, while the Ionic columns and pilasters are made of sandstone blocks.

The contributions of the Indians to this culture-pattern is considerable. The great culture of Indians did not fail to impress foreigners including the Greeks, who became eager to exchange ideas and take part in the social and religious activities of the local population. The Parthians who accepted Greek as their court language in their own country, used the Indian script and language on their coins when they settled in India. The Greeks did not display the same standoffishness towards the Indians as they showed to other non-Hellenese. The case of the Greek Heliodoros, an inhabitant of Taxila adopting the Bhāgavata religion is one of the instances of the attitude of the Greeks to the Indian culture.

Taxila history is the sad story of a grand culture destroyed by Time. Several civilizations invaded it, many rulers ruled it, and Buddhism flourished there. But today it's only a piece of archeology. What all wealth of Buddhist knowledge was lost to us, God alone knows! □

A Chaplain Strives for Interfaith Harmony

FR WILLIAM TREACY

Fr William Treacy was ordained a priest in 1944. He was a parish minister for some years, and then, between 1947 and 1963, he served as assistant to the archbishop. From 1960 to 1974, he was a panellist on the award winning television programme Challenge. He retired to an interfaith retreat centre by name Camp Brotherhood around 1996, after 30 long years in parish ministry. He was a good friend of Swami Vividishananda of the Vedanta Society of Western Washington, Seattle, among others. Fr Treacy speaks of interfaith understanding.

Born and raised in Southern Ireland, I experienced a great sorrow over the religious differences in my former homeland. A major cause of the conflict was not due to religion but to politics. Religion was used to take over ownership of land from the Irish by force from outside in past centuries. There are signs that healing is taking place and an era of peace seems close at hand and religious understanding and respect.

My own education in the need for inter-religious understanding came from a rabbi born and raised in Czarist Russia. The late Rabbi Raphael Levine of Seattle came to America from Russian-occupied Lithuania early in the last century. He became a lawyer and later decided on rabbinic studies, and was ordained a rabbi in 1932. He spent the following nine years in Liverpool and London. In the course of his ministry, he met many refugees from Nazi Germany. A bomb destroyed his synagogue in 1941 and he returned to America.

He was hired to be the Chief Rabbi of the largest synagogue in Seattle, USA, the Temple de Hirsch Sinai. He became well known in the Seattle area for his interest in the education of youth and civic endeavours in general, and interfaith understanding.

In 1960, John F. Kennedy, a Catholic, was seeking the presidency of the United States. The rabbi received 'mountains of mail', warning of the danger to America if a Catholic was elected President. This propaganda claimed

that the Pope would be giving the President orders, that the rights of Protestants would be curtailed and special privileges extended to the Catholic Church.

Rabbi Levine was in America in 1928 when another Catholic, Al Smith, was seeking the presidency and was defeated. The anti-Catholic propaganda at the time helped in his defeat. When it surfaced again in 1960, attempting to divide Americans along religious lines, Rabbi Levine decided to combat this attempt to divide people.

He approached William Warren, manager of KOMO-TV, Seattle, to discuss his concerns. Mr Warren agreed to donate a half hour of primetime 6 pm Sunday evenings if the rabbi could obtain a Catholic and a Protestant spokespersons to discuss the issues being used to cause divisions. Initial programmes discussed tolerance, religious freedom, the approach to education, the role of the Pope, etc. Other subjects were taken from the news of the day.

The Catholic archbishop appointed me as spokesperson for Catholics and a Protestant pastor, Dr Martin Goslin, spoke for the Protestant position. The first programme was aired in September 1960. Within a few months it had an audience of 360,000 viewers in Washington state and British Columbia, Canada. A favourite statement of the rabbi was, 'We are assisted by our differences.' Most of the colleges in the area invited us to share our views with students. The programme con-

tinued weekly for 14 years until the rabbi retired. He and I were anchors for all that time and various Protestant ministers joined us.

After the programme was broadcast for six years, the rabbi decided to purchase a farm and establish an interfaith centre where people of different religions and races could meet for discussion, reflection and prayer. In 1968, the Governor of the state of Washington dedicated the 200-acre retreat centre with accommodations for over 100 people. Since then we have added three new lodges and still cannot accommodate all those who wish to come. Last year we had 5,000 people participate in programmes representing over 100 different religious organizations.

On New Year's Eve 1999, to welcome the new century, we hosted a lunch for 100 people, followed by an hour of prayer and meditation in our new chapel. Present were Native Americans, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Jews and Christians. The leader of each faith spoke for 10 minutes on hopes and fears as we approached the new century. Swami Bhaskarananda, from the Vedanta centre in Seattle, spoke with eloquence and his presence recalled my friendship with Swami Vividishananda, also from the Vedanta centre in Seattle. He lived a few doors from me and spoke in my parish church on several occasions. The monks at the centre, who took such good care of Swami Vividishananda in his final illness, invited me to speak at his funeral service.

In speaking to parishioners or on the occasions I was privileged to speak at the Vedanta Society of Western Washington, Seattle, with Swami Vividishananda, I pointed out the significance of the Vatican Council document 'Declaration on the Relationship of the Church to Non-Christian Religions'. Paul F. Knitter, a Catholic theologian, writes in his book *No Other Name?*: 'For the first time in the history of official church statements, the religions of the world are singled out and praised for the way they have answered those profound mysteries of the human condition.'

The Council spoke as follows: 'In Hinduism men contemplate the divine mystery and express it through an unspent fruitfulness of myth and through searching philosophical enquiry. They seek release from the anguish of our condition through ascetical practices or deep meditation, or a loving, trusting, flight towards God.'

I agree with those Catholic theologians like Paul Knitter who wish to explore the similarities between Hindu and Christian beliefs. We share a concept of God's appearance on earth, similarities between the Christian Trinity and Hindu ultimate Reality. The Church at Vatican Council encouraged dialogue with the followers of other religions to acknowledge and preserve and promote the insights that lead to peace and justice.

Knitter has this insightful comment on the nature of the Christian Church: 'Theologians argue that if the Church is to be understood not as an exclusive sanctuary but as a universal symbol of salvation, then the real mission of Christ and the church is not redemption, but "epiphany". The Church finds its *raison d'être* not in "saving from sin, but in showing the complete epiphany of God" that is in representing more clearly, bringing to fuller consciousness and engagement the presence of grace and truth that has already been "constituted" in the religions (but not only in the religions) independently of Christ and the Church.'

Knitter also quotes Karl Rahner, one of the leading theologians at the Vatican Council, on the meaning of being a Christian. It is not to have a better chance of being saved, rather one chooses to be a Christian because one accepts the responsibility of serving, clarifying, knowing the presence of God wherever and however it is found.

Recently I experienced a model of Church as 'epiphany'. I visited with the captain of the mercy ship *Caribbean Mercy*, which operates in Central and South America. The crew are from different nations and different Christian Churches. They serve without pay

and are instruments of healing to thousands and thousands, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, the power to walk to those who have lost limbs. This ministry is given freely to Christian and non-Christian to reveal God's love in the world.

About 25 years ago, I spent some time with Fr Thomas Keating, a Trappist monk who is reminding Catholics about a legacy that became overlooked at the tragic divisions of Christians in the 16th century. From the earliest times, Christian monks in the Egyptian desert practised meditation and brought it West. The great medieval scholar, Meister Eckhart, emphasized the importance of meditation in these words: 'We should cease flapping our gums at God!' The Catholic Church in the 16th century became fearful of individuals claiming insights from God and starting splinter movements, which often led to division and disharmony. For that reason, meditation was discouraged. Today, we are rediscovering this rich legacy.

While I believe in the importance of interreligious dialogue, I believe that we make more progress in our relationship to one another, through meditation. James Finley, in his book *The Contemplative Heart*, sums up what meditation is:

The contemplative way is not that of striving for some far-off goal that we may or may not attain, but rather is a way of discovering a secret hidden deep within our hearts.

The contemplative way is not that of figuring out some obscure teaching, but is rather that

of learning to see what is always before our eyes.

The contemplative way is not that of mastering some method of meditation, but is rather of learning not to do violence to the fragility of our waiting.

With this I am in full agreement.

Together as Hindus and Christians, we can bring to people the message of a Jewish mystic who left us Psalm 72:

*God rescues the poor who call to Him
and those who are needy and neglected.
He has pity on the weak and the poor;
He saves the lives of those in need,
He rescues them from oppression*

and violence:

Their lives are precious to Him.

Fr Teilhard de Chardin was born in France in 1881 and died in New York on Easter Sunday 1955. He gained worldwide recognition for his scientific research in China, South Asia and South Africa as a palaeontologist. His favourite quotation is on the stationery of every letter I write. It is as follows: 'The cry I hear in all creation is, Lord make us one.'

In his well-received book *The Phenomenon of Man*, he writes: 'To those who only know it outwardly, Christianity seems desperately intricate. In reality...it contains an extremely simple, bold solution of the world. In the centre, so glaring as to be disconcerting, is the uncompromising affirmation of a personal God. God as Providence, directing the universe to us on the level of and through the ways of intelligence.' □

'Liberal-minded devotees accept all the forms of God. ... But, again, there is a thing called nishthā, single-minded devotion. When the gopis went to Mathurā they saw Krishna with a turban on His head. At this they pulled down their veils and said: "Who is this man? Where is *our* Krishna with the peacock feather on His crest and the yellow cloth on His body?" Hanumān also had that unswerving devotion. He came to Dwārakā in the cycle of Dwāpara. Krishna said to Rukmini, His queen, "Hanumān will not be satisfied unless he sees the form of Rāma." So, to please Hanumān, Krishna assumed the form of Rāma,' says *Sri Ramakrishna*.

Man and Nature—A Spiritual Perspective

B. N. NEELIMA

B.N. Neelima teaches communication and journalism at the Sri Padmavathi Mahila University, Tirupati. In this charming essay, she tells us how to live in harmony with nature from the spiritual point of view.

From the earliest times, human beings have been striving to share a harmonious relationship with nature. Almost all the early efforts of individuals to survive in a harsh environment included a conversation process, aimed to pacify the natural forces of wind, rain, storm, etc. An avid respect for nature is evident in all the religions that came up during the transition of the human being from the ape-like mammal to a thinking individual. Today, in this age of reckless destruction of natural resources, there is a need to look into our culture and spiritual traditions and find effective solutions to this issue of nest-fouling. The various religions of the world can provide avenues for a probe into the conscience of the masses and formulate policies for adopting effective practices that conserve the environment.

The Society-Nature Interface

The prehistoric society represented by a hunter-gatherer community and, later, the agrarian societies, reflects an age when man lived in complete harmony with nature. Even today, the various forces of nature, depicted as deities, are being worshipped and revered in almost all human societies. In the horticultural societies of the southeastern Europe in the period between 7,000 to 3,500 BC, feminine deities represented the natural fertility and generative power of nature. The people of the Indus Valley civilization worshipped the 'Mother Goddess' (earth), whose figurines have been found in archeological excavations. She personified prosperity and fertility in tune with nature's bounties. In many of the aboriginal and Native American societies, 'Mother

Earth' or 'the Great Mother' was regarded as 'the beginning and end of all life on earth'. The reverence for nature-deities was and is present in the spiritual traditions of shamanism, pantheism, paganism, and Hinduism. The goddess Earth in various civilizations took the form of Isis (Egypt), Ishtar (Mesopotamia), Demeter and Gaia (Greece), Ceres (Roman), all of whom were the harbingers of life on earth, and symbolized creation.

The concept of species chauvinism or anthropo-centralism, as it is addressed today, gradually began to evolve in these civilizations. Man was considered the all-powerful element in creation and his priority was to attain prosperity over those of the other species. In ancient Mesopotamia, humans claimed a divine right to tame the monstrous chaos of nature while classical Greek humanists (Aristotle, Plato) and the early Stoics claimed that the resources of nature were there for the exclusive use of humankind. The Judeo-Christian edicts, which command humans to 'have domain over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepth upon the earth' (*Genesis*, 1:26), has in its philosophy a deeply anthropo-centric approach in religious and spiritual thought. Even though the universe was still seen as organic, spiritual, and living, humankind's space in that universe was regarded as separate and above that of nature and all that was non-human. Bacon and Descartes, Newton and Hobbes, and all 17th century philosophers enlightened the ascent of man over nature, which was central to humankind's prog-

ress. Mechanistic materialism, rationality, and scientific reductionism became the ideological cornerstones of the Industrial Revolution of the West. The power of human beings in controlling the forces of nature was considered possible, given the advancement in science and technology.

The core of the religion of humanism emerged as a supreme faith in human reason—its ability to confront and solve the many problems that humans face, its ability to rearrange the world of nature for the prosperity of humanity. As humanism is committed to this unquestioning faith in the power of reason, it rejects other assertions, including the power of God, supernatural forces, and even the undirected power of nature in league with blind chance.

Devall and Sessions (*Deep Ecology*, 1985) propound that fundamental to the industrial-materialist-scientific worldview is the exorcism of nature as an organic, living, and spiritual entity. Nature is, however, regarded as subservient to humanity. In this mechanistic, hierarchical worldview, both humans and nature are objectified and valued only in utilitarian, instrumental terms, rather than for any intrinsic or spiritual value.

The Industrial Revolution and the consequent race for development, which is often the pursuit of affluence, rather than moderation, has heralded an unprecedented rate of ecological crisis. In the pursuit of a high standard of living and economic prosperity, humankind is ignoring the ecological crisis that it has triggered off, and which is endangering the existence of all on the planet. A number of national and international organizations are working to find a feasible solution to this problem of nest-fouling; there has been a growing realization in finding solutions to environmental degradation in the deep-rooted value systems and spirituality. There is an urgent need to find spiritual or religious avenues to promote peace in the planet. Human identity and personal fulfilment somehow depend upon our relationship with nature. The hu-

man need for nature is linked not just to the material exploitation of the environment, but also to the influence of the natural world on our emotional, cognitive, aesthetic and even spiritual development. Transformation changes cannot occur without a deep insight into the realms of values and beliefs that form the spiritual consciousness of humanity. Developing a sustainable relationship with the environment requires a deep awareness not only of the biophysical environment within which we live, but also of one's own spirituality.

Nature-centred Spiritual Traditions

The reverence for nature-centred deities is profound in almost all the religions and philosophies. Several different traditions talk about four or five different worlds and say that the Creator made all these worlds with one simple law: that we shall be in harmony and in balance with all the things, including the sun. Moreover, time and again, we have destroyed that harmony. And we have done it needlessly. Unless we bring about that balance again, this is our last chance.

The shamanic spiritual traditions (indigenous cultures) and neo-paganism reflect this philosophy very intensely. Indigenous people all over the world have been practising the shamanic spiritual traditions for over 20,000 years. There are three basic assumptions underlying the shamanic spiritual system:

1. The existence of numerous coexisting and interpenetrating worlds of experience;
2. The need for holistic balance among these worlds; and
3. That change is a continuous transformation process.

Shamanic spiritual traditions profess that spirituality is not a religion with a fixed set of dogmas but, rather, spirituality pervades and infuses all forms of existence—human, animate, and inanimate. The South Siberian Turks consider the *axis mundi* to be a tree and the shaman's drum is made from that tree. Shamanic spiritual traditions identify multiple sources of spiritual and practical in-

formation, which can assist in healing a destructive imbalance between human societies and the natural environment.

Pagan spirituality (or Wicca) is based on the core concepts of immanence wherein everyone and everything in nature has inherent value and power, interconnection among the human and natural worlds, and integrity of thoughts, words, and practice. The image of Gaia, the Greek goddess of earth, has been adopted by those who envision the world as a living spiritual organism within which life is holistic, systematic, symbiotic, connective and participatory. This has influenced Gaian meditations and rituals to rediscover one's connection with nature. The spirituality of contemporary goddess represents a resurgence of pantheism; neo-pagan spirituality remains truer to ritual practices of ancient Celtic and indigenous societies. As ecological belief systems, nature-centred spiritual traditions such as shamanism, goddess spirituality, and neo-paganism reinstate human beings' spiritual relationship with an animate and sacred nature.

Nature in Asian Religions

Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism contain elaborate and deep reflections into the relationship between man and nature. The Hindu religion advocates the worship of nature in storm, wind and fire, and personifies various animals as deities to be revered and worshipped. Nature is the spiritual guide and teacher in a religion, which has codified environmentally beneficial practices in its rituals and proverbs. Buddhism preaches nirvana as the ultimate spiritual truth, transcending everything else. The 'middle path' prophesies simplicity in living and renunciation of material wealth and lower pleasures. The Buddhist principle of reciprocity and interdependence is based on the belief that 'all events and beings are interdependent and interrelated in a universe which is a mutually causal web of relationship as in the image of the jewel net of Indra.'

In Taoism, reality is Tao (the way of

transformation and change), Sheng-Sheng (life creativity) and Chi'i (the energy which creates, connects and balances all forms). Rather than being the product of a transcendent God, the Tao is the infinite energy of the cosmos—a totality and unity of being which embraces everything, large or small, in the universe and imparts a unity of relationships in environment. Taoism teaches of the need for balance with nature and the spiritual world, with the relationship between humans and the environment being one of holistic interdependence, interpretation, and interaction. Further, interference with the delicately balanced natural order will lead to upset and disorder. The book *I Ching* pronounces that peace and prosperity are not automatic outcomes of life, but require a creative effort by humankind. Lack of constructive action could lead to stagnation and disorder.

Most Asian philosophies stress upon the fact that the environment responds in tune with human treatment of it. The environment is a perfect mirror of man. The Vedic people were one with nature (see for instance *R̥g Veda*, 8.58.2-3, a *vālakhilya* hymn). The intimacy of man with nature is expressed with great joy in the Vedas (*R̥g Veda*, 8.31.10): 'We solicit the happiness afforded by the hills, the rivers, the sun....' The Vedic man was technically bound to nature. There is an interesting parallel of the Greek Gordian knot in the *R̥g Veda* where Indra (the king of gods) and Agni are invoked: '...may you cut the evils...like tangles of the creeping plant.' In the *R̥g Veda* (10.113.5) the three powers who regulate society are linked together: Varuna's maya, Mitra's law, and Indra's sovereignty. The Vedic *ṛṣis* saw a harmonious movement everywhere; they saw constant changes within the harmony with nature, and this they interpreted as the law and order of the universe (*ṛta*). It is in this sense that celestial bodies, rivers, forests, and living beings move around, grow, reproduce and thus participate in the cosmic drama. The ancient sages made use of nature, Mother Earth, and the waters of

life. The deep respect for the life principle personified in Lord Savitā and inherent in all living beings made man one of the many knots of a complex web, rather than the centre of a universe created for the use and benefit of man himself, as vouchsafed by later creeds.

Buddhism, Taoism, and shamanism suggest that ecological transformation can occur by letting 'a thousand flowers bloom', ie a change in one's ecological consciousness will in turn create an ecological consciousness group and society. This calls for a high level of dedication, patience, and faith.

Nature-centred religions and Asian spiritual traditions emphasize balance and harmony in human-environment relationships. The principle of non-violence is deeply ingrained in most of the traditions. They view all life on earth as sacred and thus having a spiritual dimension to it. They have been particularly influential in the development of eco-feminist philosophy. The concept proposes the achievement of social justice that is central to environmental justice to end all kinds of domination in patriarchal cultures. Spirituality provides eco-feminists with the energy to challenge and survive oppressive hierarchical systems to create new systems based on the principles of egalitarianism, inclusiveness, community feeling, consensual decision-making, mutual care, and responsibility.

A strong ecological focus is also seen in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Though it has a strong anthropocentric focus, 'be fruitful, multiply, and have dominion over living thing that moveth upon the earth,' alternative Christian views have also emerged. Early Celtic Christianity advanced a view of the mystical intimacy of human nature and the divine in which there was a human partnership with the natural world. Christian theologians like John Cobb and David Ray Griffin have proposed an eco-theology based on an ecosystem perspective. The Reverend James Park Morton, dean of the Episcopal Cathedral of St

John the Divine in New York City, says: 'We forgot that dominion has its roots in *dominus*—dweller in the house or caretaker, the Latin equivalent of *oikos* in ecology.'

The Islamic principle of *al-tawhid* (unity) links human beings with nature. The principles of *khalifa* (trusteeship) and *akhrah* (accountability) in the Koran spell out Muhammad's edicts to humans: 'He hath appointed you his vicereagents on the earth' (*sura* 35); '...and commit not disorder on the earth after it hath been well-ordered' (*sura* 7). No religion is so vocative against destruction of domestic and wild life and against decimation of the God-granted natural wealth as Islam.

Though mankind's future well-being is heavily dependent upon the potency of the environment, widespread ecological degradation has led doomsday prophets to prophesy the end of human race along with its co-habitants on this biotype. Developing a sense of ecological perception or awareness is the first step towards overcoming the destructive myopia and denial, which is at the foundation of the modern ecological crisis. Spiritual religions provide an alternative path for influencing individual belief systems towards conserving the environment. Most nature-centred spiritual traditions, Asian philosophies in particular, have deeply influenced the relationship between man and his environment.

Spiritual values and beliefs can guide humanity effectively through the modern ecological crisis. There is a need for bringing about fundamental changes in the ecological consciousness of man, and the ideal starting point is from within. To the degree that religions and spiritual traditions influence social norms and behaviours, they provide the inspiration and personal commitment so needed for ecological self-discipline and activism. □

The author acknowledges the help taken from many important books in preparing this article.

RELIGION AND LIFE

Swami Bhuteshanandaji's Answers to Questions

The questions and answers being serialized in these columns are not meant to be scholarly expositions of various issues. People from different walks of life used to meet Swami Bhuteshanandaji Maharaj daily during his tenure as President of the Ramakrishna Order, and discuss with him their problems and doubts; and Revered Maharaj would clear their doubts in a characteristically simple way. These questions and answers were recorded and read out to him before he approved them all for publication.

The Divine Mother is said to have told Sri Ramakrishna to remain in bhāvamukha. What is bhāvamukha?

Swami Saradanandaji has explained *bhāvamukha* in *Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*. *Bhāvamukha* implies the source of all ideas. That is the supreme state where infinite (*ananta*) and finite (*sānta*) are experienced simultaneously.

Swami Saradananda says: 'The Master [ie Sri Ramakrishna] appeared to us as a visible embodiment of the "aggregate of all kinds of ideas." Such a great king in "the world of ideas" was never seen before. Constantly dwelling in Bhavamukha, the Master manifested in himself to the fullest degree all the spiritual states from the non-dual Nirvikalpa to the Savikalpa, acquainted devotees of all classes with the details of their particular paths and goals, and thus brought to them extraordinary light in the darkness of ignorance, unprecedented hope in despair, and incomparable peace amidst worldly trials and tribulations' [*Sri Ramakrishna the Great Master*, p. 435].

Maharaj, shall we say that the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna are the Vedas?

No, not that way. Sri Ramakrishna's words are not Vedas, but he has spoken the truths of the Vedas.

Hriday served Sri Ramakrishna so much. Yet why did he suffer the way he did?

M., the compiler of *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, remarked once that Hriday was perhaps not free from selfish motives in his

service to Sri Ramakrishna. That may be the reason for his suffering. Further, there are no hard and fast rules that a devotee of God will not suffer grief and sorrow; there are many such instances in the Purāṇas. The devotee Sudāma was very poor and could not afford even daily meals. One day Sudāma went to Kṛṣṇa to seek help. Kṛṣṇa asked him: 'What have you brought for me?' Poor Sudāma did not have much to give. He brought out a few sweet balls and hesitantly handed them over to Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa expressed great happiness at this and ate the sweet balls. Sudāma returned to his village and saw that his hut was no longer there. Instead, there stood a huge building. This is not a reward for Sudāma's sweets, nor is it the fruit of his karma. This is an imagination. If one has craving for wealth and prays to God, it is not that God will fulfil the wishes. The *gopis* of Vrindaban did not know anything but God. Yet they had to weep their whole life. Some *gopis* had been taken to Dwaraka. While returning, some dacoits looted their wealth; so they jumped into a well and committed suicide. So it is not that you become wealthy and happy just because you are a devotee. Wealth and happiness are all imaginations of the human mind. Human beings love to think of these things. The *Gītā* [7.16] says that there are four types of devotees: one type who call on God to remove distress; a second type who want to know His nature; a third type who seek wealth and plenty; and the last type who are persons of knowledge, who hold on to Him, knowing His nature.

*Caturvidhā bhajante mām
janāḥ sukṛtino' rjuna;*

*Ārto jijñāsurarthārthī
jñāni ca bharatarṣabha.*

He who knows God's nature and holds on to Him is His greatest devotee.

What is the meaning of 'Alakh Niranjan'?

Alakh means 'that which is not seen,' and *niranjan* means 'without any stains'; it is the Self or Ātman.

Brahman is static. When It is creating, preserving and destroying, It is called Ādyāśakti. Sri Ramakrishna advises us to pray to Ādyāśakti. Now, are Sri Ramakrishna and the Mother different?

Sri Ramakrishna too is Ādyāśakti alone! He has said several times that within him Ādyāśakti or the Divine Mother alone resides. He said, 'I feel that it is the Divine Mother Herself who dwells in this body and plays with the devotees' [*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 831]. We must think of Sri Ramakrishna as the embodiment of all moods and all the gods. Holy Mother is a special manifestation of Sri Ramakrishna's power. If we hold on to Sri Ramakrishna, it means we hold on to Holy Mother, and vice versa.

Sri Ramakrishna used to say that he would have the vision of the Divine Mother as he came down from the state of nirvikalpa samādhi. How is this explained?

Between the non-dual and the dual states is the world of *bhāva*. Since in that state there is a fusion—and so the experience—of both non-duality and duality, Sri Ramakrishna could retain his power of speech and narrate his experiences. He had to teach the world, so the Divine Mother told him that he must remain in *bhāvamukha*. That source from which the world of dualities (*jagat*) originates is called *bhāvamukha*, 'the source of *bhāva*'.

Please do not compare Sri Ramakrishna with any of his disciples, or with anybody else. In his disciples there was only a partial expression of his spiritual glory; if not, they too would have been called incarnations. Sri

Ramakrishna has no parallel. Sri Ramakrishna has said that there were two persons in his body: one, the Divine Mother, and the other, the devotee [cf. *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 943]. There is no conflict between dualism and non-dualism there. Swami Turiyananda used to quote Sri Ramakrishna and say that the body knows its troubles, but let the mind be immersed in bliss. Śrī Śaṅkara also has said:

*Dehādi bhāvaṁ parivartayantah
svātmānamātmāny-avalokayantah.*

(*Kaupīna-pañcakam*)

One has to endure suffering if one assumes a body; so hold on to the Self.

Sri Ramakrishna has said that Vedānta is not good for the householder. Why?

By Vedānta, the 'I am He' idea is meant. Sri Ramakrishna has said that for those who lead householders' lives, and those who identify themselves with the body, the attitude of 'I am He' is not good [*The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, p. 593]. So he has said that they must not read books on Vedānta like the *Yogavāsiṣṭha*. But he has advised householders to look upon God as the Master and on themselves as His servants.

Maharaj, is it possible to follow so many teachings of Sri Ramakrishna?

Is it possible for any to follow all the teachings of Sri Ramakrishna? Each individual accepts what is possible for him or her and grows spiritually. Later, when the receptacle becomes big, Sri Ramakrishna will himself fill it from his infinite source of bliss.

Swami Vivekananda has remarked about Sri Ramakrishna that Gorācānd fills love vessel after vessel but still he does not seem to become empty. Just imagine his filling vessel after vessel, and you will understand. How much can you take? Can everyone take what is given? If we receive just a drop of it, our lives will become blessed, supremely blessed.

—Compiled by Smt Manju Nandi Mazumdar

Ramakrishna and the Beginner in Spiritual Life

N. S. CHAKRAVARTHY

N.S. Chakravarty from New Delhi had a brilliant academic career and held various important positions. He is presently a member of the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research, Ghaziabad, and also a member of the board of studies, School of Planning and Architecture, New Delhi. In this article, an edited version of his speech at the Ramakrishna Mission, New Delhi, Chakravarty studies the beginner's struggle in spiritual life.

How and why do we take to spiritual life? At what stage of our psycho-physical existence do we feel the need to bring about a change in our manner of existence and set off for a life of sadhana?

From the moment we are born, we are compelled by conditions and circumstances to tread the path of pragmatic life. How this happens is interesting. We seem to be confident of marching through all the vicissitudes and difficulties of life, and set standards of thought and action for ourselves which seem impenetrable if not invincible. Suddenly, however, at some stage of life, all our standards and bases of confidence seem to fail us. That is the moment when we need a change in our course.

Fortunately for us in India, we are blessed from time immemorial with a spiritual tradition. The national life of the country has been characterized by an undercurrent of intense spirituality all through. Societal needs in each age might have changed with the changing times but, as Swami Vivekananda says, religion has remained all through as the life-breath of the nation. Though this national fabric has been subject to a lot of wear and tear due to historical circumstances and various other factors, in each epoch there have come divine interventions through the advent of avatars, who correct both our courses—of individuals as well as of the national mainstream.

For our age, God incarnated in the form of Sri Ramakrishna who, as Swami Vivekananda perceived, was the greatest of avatars (*avatāra varīṣṭha*).

Coming to ourselves, we must know what the problem is that we are facing today. Is it a crisis of identity? Is there a deep sense of insecurity? Is the individual shattered by the overwhelming personal, emotional, and social tragedies he or she is passing through? Sri Aurobindo says in *Essays on the Gita*: 'The human being, finds himself in a world which is apparently a chaos of battling powers, a clash of vast and obscure forces, a life which subsists only by constant change and death, menaced from every side by pain, suffering, evil and destruction...human forces clash for a huge destruction and reconstruction.' In what planes do human forces clash? 'Intellectual, moral, religious and political. These take place in the psychological and social stages of human evolution, which culminate usually through a violent physical convulsion of strife, war or revolution.' Of course, Sri Aurobindo was speaking in the context of Kurukshetra. We may interpret his statement as our temperament or present predilections are inclined—either in allegorical terms, or in a historical perspective. If we take it in allegorical terms and view it from a micro perspective, our individual and immediate personal Kurukshetra, our mind, comes to the fore and our own personal relation to the current context becomes relevant. Sri Ramakrishna's life and message can be summarized in two simple but profound statements: One, 'Realize God first. Pray to Him with a yearning heart, and you are sure to realize Him.' This calls for great faith. Two, 'You cannot deny mortal ex-

istence—good, evil, treachery, etc are all there in the world, which is God's projection.' So all knowledge is valid, and both the secular and the sacred have their own place, but our pursuit of any particular course has its corresponding consequence, of which we are the choosers.

What is the pathway to God and realization? God alone is real—there is the affirmation of Ramakrishna that even in this Kali Yuga we can see Him. But then Ramakrishna warned against mere scholarship.

I shall narrate an incident which I heard from the present head of the Ramakrishna Mission Ashrama, Jaipur. One evening, during a discourse on Vedanta by Swami Akhandananda at the Khetri palace, one of the courtiers, from amongst the usual psychophantic entities that some are, wanted to please the Maharaja. So, after hearing from Akhandanandaji some of the usual Vedantic expressions mentioned to the Maharaja, told the former: 'Swamiji, our king already knows all this.' What he meant was, the king was well-versed in scriptures. Swami Akhandanandaji shot back: 'What? Those scriptures which the great seers have compiled after deep contemplation, meditation and such punishing austerities all their lives, to be understood by your Maharaja and his having become aware of them!' The Khetri Maharaja said with folded hands to the swamiji: 'Maharaj, you have stated a wonderful truth.' This shows that the path to be traversed to realize the Truth is difficult, and mere study of scriptures and acquiring dry scholarship is not enough.

The modern individual thinks he's very rational. But is he? With all its quest after external nature, modern science has occupied itself with complexity and multiplicity, though science has always instinctively and subconsciously aimed at integration and in finding a common answer. Science, one suspects, has also aimed at an integration of all forms of pursuit of external knowledge, by linking together all forms of physical and natural sci-

ences. But the scientific methodology still seems to be, insofar as today's understanding is concerned, very different from the discriminatory method of reason employed by Vedanta, which leads to exploring the depth-dimension of man. So a careless comparison of the scientific methodology along with its *a priori* assumptions and the self-imposed tools of examination employed by science with the path and method employed by Vedantic explorers can be a very tricky course, and may lead us into a blind alley. So we realize the limitations of science. Having said this, it would be pertinent to say that no form of knowledge is completely meaningless. Everything forms a part of God. We must, however, be cautious to remember that 'The paramahansa realizes that all these—good and bad, virtue and vice, real and unreal—are only glories of God's *māyā*' (Sri Ramakrishna). This cannot be comprehended by us beginners. So, where do we stand? What is our bearing?

That is how we seek refuge in Sri Ramakrishna. He assures us that a person will certainly succeed if he or she takes the plunge. As Srimat Swami Ranganathanandaji Maharaj keeps saying, spirituality is in the marketplace. It is not confined to the deep recesses of caves nor the lofty heights of mountains. And the avatar of the modern age has declared that for the Kali Yuga, devotion is the best path. Devotion means to constantly remember the Lord and chant His name. Sri Ramakrishna says that we should pray to God with a yearning heart. Sri Ramakrishna says to Vidyasagar: 'One must have faith and love. ... If a man has faith in God, then he need not be afraid though he may have committed sin—nay, the vilest sin. ... Faith and devotion. One realizes God easily through devotion. He is grasped through ecstasy of love.'

So the central message of Sri Ramakrishna is to demonstrate to humanity that the way human character has evolved in this age, if one has to reach God, devotion and remembering God are the best methods. □

Abu Yazid Bistami

Abu Yazid Bistami, more commonly called Bayazid Bistami, was a great Sufi. Even as a boy, he showed great love for God. One day he told his mother: 'Today I read a saying in which the Lord tells me to serve both Him and you, but I cannot have two masters. Either you must ask of God that I may be forever yours, or you must dedicate me to Him that I may be fully His servant.' His mother answered: 'My son, I renounce all claim on you; henceforth you have no duty towards me. Go, I give you to the service of God.'

Bayazid left home and wandered in search of a spiritual master. It was then that the influence of Hindu spirituality made a deep impress on his life. Bayazid learnt the art of proper breathing and watching the breath. He also developed the Sufi doctrine of *fana*, 'the passing away of the personal Self and becoming one with the divine Absolute.' He met a saint in Sadek, who helped him a lot in spirituality.

Bayazid said about his days of sadhana: 'At the beginning I was mistaken in four respects: I concerned myself to remember God, to know Him, to love Him, and to seek Him. But when I came to the end I saw that He had remembered me before I remembered Him, that His knowledge of me had preceded my knowledge of Him, that His love for me had existed before my love for Him, and that He had sought me before I sought Him.'

There are beautiful anecdotes about this saint. One time, a certain spiritual aspirant confessed before Bayazid: 'Sir, though for thirty years I have been fasting in the daytime and keeping awake each night, I still find no results of these practices in my life. What is the reason?' Bayazid replied: 'Why speak of thirty years? If for thirty hundred years you practise daily fast and prayer in the same way and con-

tinue in your present condition unchanged, there will still be not a breath of the fragrance of truth in your life.' The aspirant asked: 'Why?' The saint replied: 'You have covered your life with a cloud.'

'Is there any remedy?' asked the aspirant.

'Yes, but you will not accept it.'

'What! I have been seeking it for years. Certainly I shall accept it,' said the aspirant eagerly.

'Very well, then. Shave your head and replace your luxurious dress with a blanket, wrapped about your person. Remove everything from your body which awakens the sense of beauty. Go to a public section of the village where they know you well; have some toys at hand and call the boys together, saying, "Whoever pushes me once by the neck, to him I shall give one toy, but to him who pushes me twice I shall give two." Then walk around the village and be tormented by the boys. Live in that locality where you will be most insulted. This is the great remedy for you.'

When the aspirant heard the cure for his spiritual disease, he cried: 'Oh God! I shall never be able to take this medicine! Give such advice to others, not to me.' The saint said with a smile: 'It is necessary, though you reject it.'

Towards the end of his life, when someone asked about his age, Bayazid said that he was only four years old. 'How can that be?' inquired the other. The saint answered: 'For seventy years I was under the cloud of the world, and only for the last four years have I really come out from under it, so that I can see God. I do not count the years in which I was overshadowed by the world as part of my life.'

Bayazid declared: 'There is a treasure-house within, containing a pearl called love. He who gains that pearl is a saint.' □

What Has Gone Wrong?

PROF AMALENDU CHAKRABORTY

Here's a very interesting discussion. The mother of all subjects, philosophy, is today on the brink of becoming homeless: she is knocking doors in her own motherland. Not because she has lost value, but because other subjects are ruling the roost. Here's a philosopher, who has devoted his life to this subject and has taught generations of students at the prestigious Presidency College, Kolkata, discussing the situation.

Why is philosophy no longer loved today? Why have her children, the sciences, divided her inheritance among themselves and turned her out of doors, like King Lear with 'ingratitude unkindier than the winter's wind'? Most of the intellectuals of the present century are declaring philosophy an obsolete subject in the age of reason, science and technology. Is there any need of metaphysical speculation about the nature of man, God, soul and matter in our times? Have not religion and mysticism outlived their purposes in the presence of empiricism, which emphasizes positivism and analysis?

Technology has benefitted humanity in various ways and made us free from many incurable diseases. The immense nuclear power is the blessing of the scientific research, which also enables man to destroy all life on earth in a few minutes just by pressing a button. Can philosophy match these achievements? These are some of the questions which philosophers face today. Indeed the subject of our contemporary dilemma and predicaments is too complex to rationalize.

Those were the golden days for philosophy when, bravely, she took all knowledge into her province and threw herself at every turn into the forefront of the mind's advance. Men honoured her then; nothing was held nobler than the love of truth. We know Socrates chose to be her martyr, Plato risked himself twice to win a kingdom for her; and Bruno burned at the stake for his loyalty to her. Once upon a time, thrones and papacies feared phi-

losophy and imprisoned her votaries lest dynasties should fall. Once upon a time, philosophy was a many-coloured light that filled with warmth and radiance the profoundest souls; now she is the ignominious satellite of fragmentary sciences and scholastic disciplines. Once she was the proud mistress of the intellectual globe; now despoiled of her beauty and her power, she stands by the wayside, desolate and none so poor to do her reverence. Of course, exceptions are there. Bergson fascinated great audiences with his eloquence, and Russell has had the honour of frightening a government!

Philosophy has become unpopular today because she has lost the spirit of adventure. The sudden uprising of the sciences has stolen from her, one by one, her spacious realms. 'Cosmology' has become astronomy and geology; 'Natural philosophy' has become biology and physics; and in our own day the 'Philosophy of mind' has blossomed into psychology. All the real and crucial problems have escaped from her; no longer does she concern herself with the nature of matter and the secret of vitality and growth; the 'will' whose 'freedom' she debated in a hundred wars of thought has been crushed in the mechanism of modern life; the state, whose problems were once her own, is a happy hunting ground of petty souls, and less than ever honours the counsels of philosophy.

Of late, philosophers in the West have particularly withdrawn their attention from concrete facts and practical problems facing

modern man, and have turned towards analysing the language used in philosophical issues, ethical problems or religious experiences. Oriental philosophers, including those of India, have mostly not only followed suit but have wrongly concluded that a philosophy other than analytical is not philosophy at all. The tenacious attitude of the analytical philosophers has led to a confusion about the nature of man, who is not a mere machine, but also an integrated whole of reason, emotion, will and the indestructible ground of these three characteristics of human life. Emphasis on either reason or emotion, or mere volition, as the sole expression of man's self would be a prejudicial and lopsided view. It is so because man's self is the ground of all his experiences in the waking, dream and dreamless states.

There is a common allegation against the teaching of philosophy. It is not a job-oriented subject. I think this charge is baseless and biased. In these days of computer technology and high-tech management studies, subjects like history, sociology, political science, pure mathematics, etc have suffered the same fate. The truth is that most of the successful legal practitioners and administrative officers of India in general and of West Bengal in particular are the best students of philosophy. There was a time when eminent and extraordinary teachers like Dr S.N. Dasgupta, Dr K.C. Bhattacharya, Dr B.N. Seal, Dr S. Radhakrishnan, Prof Humayun Kabir taught philosophy at the Calcutta University. Their method of teaching was something unique. They could inspire the students by their eloquent presentation and absolute command over the subject. My long association with Presidency College, Kolkata, both as a student and as a teacher, amply proves this point. Most of the teachers from the late sixties till the present day are of average calibre everywhere, and most of them cannot inspire the students. Moreover, the syllabus of philosophy both at the undergraduate

and postgraduate level is outdated. Topics like applied ethics, environmental ethics, ethics of karma yoga, applied and experimental psychology, humanistic writings of Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Swami Vivekananda's karma yoga and practical Vedanta, etc should be included in the syllabus to make it broad-based and all-comprehensive.

The general apathy for philosophy can be controlled to some extent, provided the curricula of information technology and professional courses get restructured with a little bit of humanities, and value-oriented philosophy. Syllabus for the engineering, medical, management and judiciary courses must include some philosophical topics to make those professions noble and humanistic. It is depressing to note that almost all the parents of the students are primarily concerned with their career, not with their character. And for character-building, there is no substitute for philosophy.

To popularize philosophy, regular seminars, workshops, debates, and inter-disciplinary discussions on topics closer to human life go a long way in bringing it from the lofty pedestal down to earth. Finally, for the popularization of philosophy, politicians must come forward and should take up the responsibility. It is primarily due to their non-philosophical attitude that the future of India for the new millennium is not very bright.

We have at this moment of crisis a hundred thousand politicians and not a single statesman. We move round the world with unprecedented speed, but do not know where we are going and where to stop. We are being destroyed by our knowledge, which has made us drunk with power. But we shall not be saved without wisdom. If life is to be made meaningful, there is no substitute for philosophy. Let philosophy decide our future so that the world would be a better place to live in. □

'If a man has faith in God, then even if he has committed the most heinous crime... he will certainly be saved through his faith,' says *Sri Ramakrishna*.

Earthquake-resistant Structures

SAMIR KUMAR RAY

Samir Kumar Ray is a senior engineer from Kolkata. He has worked for many national and international organizations, and on several important projects. Here are his suggestions about preventing and minimizing loss of life and property during earthquakes.

Earthquakes are frequent occurrences. So we must apply our minds to the future in a professional way. No doubt governments embark on massive rebuilding activity; but to lessen misuse of money and devastation of such magnitude as in Gujarat in the future, we have the following suggestions:

1. Adherence to the National Building Code of India must be made mandatory for all construction activities, whether in the public or in the private sectors.

2. Buildings up to 10 metres high shall be of rigid reinforced concrete structures with adequate effective shear walls. Beams framing into columns shall have haunched ends taking into account severe seismic movements.

3. Taller buildings shall have fabricated steel frames above 10 metres, designed as space frames anchored with suitable joints, to allow permissible rotation in any direction but not linear movement. Each storey frame will be a space portal and joints will transmit only vertical reaction and shear. This will make frames for all the storeys similar and help mass production in factories.

4. No building over 24 metres high shall be allowed in seismic zones IV and V.

5. Floors and walls above 10 metres shall be of hollow, lightweight, precast concrete panels designed to withstand axial, tensile and compressive forces. The fixing arrangement shall be designed to ensure the panels to act as effective shear connectors. Hollow panels will have good insulation and could be easily removed when required, helping speedy rescue operations.

6. The layout of the buildings shall be

more or less square. If not at all possible, the ratio of the height to the minimum base width shall not be less than or equal to 1.8. 'T' or 'L' shapes are to be avoided.

7. The shape of structures above 10 metres shall preferably be a truncated pyramid which will lower the centre of gravity of the buildings. In addition, use of fabricated steel frames and lightweight panels will lower the mass of the buildings. The land area required may be more but the final cost may not be higher. Use of fabricated steel structures and lightweight precast concrete panels would allow the buildings to be factory-made and erected at the site with suitable fasteners. Quality work and standardization will be achieved with efficient cost control.

8. Column foundations must be isolated and effectively secured in position with each other with the provision of strong ties in each direction. The slope of beams between two columns due to differential settlement shall be allowed up to 1 in 75.

9. Except in the case of hard or intermediate rock sub-base, raft foundations should not be used to support the column loads. Should basements be constructed, these should not be structurally integrated with the columns.

10. The water distribution network in the area should be designed to have a terminal pressure of at least 30 metres and the supply shall be available for 24 hours, if feasible. In such a case the underground and overhead reservoirs will be eliminated, reducing the top load on the structure. If 24-hour supply is not possible, every unit in the building will have containers distributed over water-consuming

rooms. The load due to water storage shall be distributed evenly over the entire building. In addition, pumping from underground reservoirs will not be necessary except for firefighting, saving considerable energy.

11. The lift-machine rooms should be brought down from the top of the building to the ground or basement level and lifts are to be redesigned like other material hoists used in the construction industry.

12. Single-storeyed houses, whether in villages or in towns, could be shaped as 'geodetic domes' or 'truncated pyramids'. These houses are very economical and highly stable structures against seismic forces. During floods, the occupants can take shelter on the

rooftops. These structures also can be of hollow precast concrete or plastic panels and could be factory-made. If properly match-marked the occupants can erect a house themselves in a day with specified fasteners. These houses will be very light and must be securely anchored to the foundation to prevent getting blown away during severe storms.

13. Before embarking on mass production of steel frames and precast panels, adequate scale model tests are recommended simulating the natural hazards.

Finally, a high-level debate is necessary to safeguard life from such calamities. □

Therī Utpalavarṇā

The nun whom the Buddha called *ṛddhi* and the greatest amongst the *bhikkhunis* was Therī Utpalavarṇā. This great Therī was one of the prominent disciples of the Buddha. She would stand to the left of the Buddha, and so she was addressed as *vāmahasta śrāvikā*. It is not that Utpalavarṇā became so great in one life itself. In the Buddhist *Apadāna* tales we have heard, she had been born as a *nāgā* woman by name Vimalā during a former Buddha by name Padumuttara. She had been born during some other Buddhas also. In the *Jātaka* we find Utpalavarṇā mentioned. During Tathāgata Buddha's time, she was born as a merchant's daughter in the city of Śrāvastī. Since her colour was like that of the central part of the lotus flower, she was named Utpalavarṇā. When she was of a marriageable age, princes and businessmen from different parts of the country began to knock at her father's door. Her father couldn't face the anger of all those who were being rejected. At last, he asked his daughter if she wished to renounce the world and become a *bhikkhuni* of the Buddhist Sangha. Utpalavarṇā became extremely happy, and agreed instantly to renounce such wealth, fame, etc. Her father took her to the *bhikkhunis*. The *bhikkhunis* accepted her and ordained her. Utpalavarṇā began performing intense austerities. She ate less, slept less, and always meditated on the transitoriness of creation. After much struggle, she became an *arhat*. All desire for the world left her totally. She became established in *prajñā* or *bodhi*. After enlightenment, she composed 12 verses in Sanskrit where she describes the futility of sensual happiness.

One time, when Utpalavarṇā was meditating in a jungle, the tempter *māra* came to trouble her. She was so strong that he couldn't go near her. She told him: 'A hundred thousand *māras* like you can't do anything to me. What will you do to me? Do you know? My mind is under full control. I have attained to *ṛddhi*. I obey the laws of the Buddha always. All darkness has left me. If you are truly *māra*, remember that the next moment you will die by the power of my mind.' *Māra* left her instantly. In time, this Therī came to be known as an ideal nun and was revered by one and all. She is remembered even now for her purity and glorious life.

—contributed by Dr Aparna Sur, Kolkata

God's Love for Human Beings

Here's an interesting conference of devotees, old and new. They discuss the nine known types of devotion. Finally, Sri Ramakrishna comes on the scene and says that there is a tenth type of devotion, known to the tantras before but not to the path of devotion.

Devotion is the simplest path to the Lord, say the scriptures. Sri Ramakrishna also says: 'It is easier to attain God by following the path of devotion.'¹ Whatever our stage in life—whether householders doing different jobs, or monks and nuns—all have equal right to practise devotion. The bhakti path is for everyone, even lower beings! There's not much philosophy or technicality, and not much difficulty involved in this path. God wants love and he loves us most dearly. As Sri Ramakrishna says: 'God reveals Himself in the form which His devotee loves most. His love for the devotee knows no bounds.'²

Our devotional scriptures teach nine types of devotion. However, there appears to be a tenth now, added by Sri Ramakrishna.

The Nine Types of Bhakti

In the *Bhāgavata* (7.5.23), Prahlāda recites a beautiful verse, which has become famous:

*Śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ
smaraṇam pādasevanam;
Arcanam vandanam dāsyam
sakhyam-ātma-nivedanam.*

Listening to the Lord's glories, singing his glories, remembering him, serving his lotus feet, worshipping him, saluting him, becoming his servant, becoming his friend, and becoming his beloved.

These are the nine types of devotion according to the scriptures.

A conference of devotees, both ancient and modern, is going on. Do you think we shouldn't mix up the old and the new? In God,

the past, present and the future have no meaning. So let's listen to the proponents of each path of devotion.

Śravaṇam:

Hearing God's Names and Glories

King Parīkṣit says: 'I was the grandson of the Pāṇḍavas and the son of the great warrior Abhimanyu. When I was in my mother Uttarā's womb, Lord Kṛṣṇa saved me from the *brahmāstra* of Sage Aśvatthāmā. I had the rare opportunity of confronting Kali, the master of the evil age *Kali Yuga* and, having defeated him, allotted him five places to live in. I could have even destroyed him, but did not. Unfortunately for me, one day I went on a hunting expedition, lost my way, became thirsty, and went to a hermitage seeking water. A sage sat in samadhi. He didn't even invite me in, show me a seat, or treat me as a guest, naturally because he was immersed in samadhi. I became angry. In great anger, I put a dead snake around his neck and left the place. The sage's son came to know about this heinous act and cursed me forthwith that the king of serpents, Takṣaka, should kill me within seven days. I became extremely repentant. Having been a devotee throughout, I came to realize that death was certain within seven days. So I renounced everything and decided to fast until death on the banks of the Gaṅgā. Hearing about my resolve, great sages came and sat around me. To such an august assemblage came the great sage, Śukadeva, who narrated the greatest scripture, *Bhāgavata*. It took seven days for him to narrate that. When the brahmin's curse became true, there was not a tinge of pain or suffering. I was so happy to leave the body and soon after that, I attained to the blessed feet of the Lord. Such is the wonder of

1. M., *The Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna*, trans. Swami Nikhilananda (Madras: Ramakrishna Math, 1985), p. 149. [Hereafter, *Gospel*.]

2. *Gospel*, p. 150

listening to His glories. In the *Bhāgavata* (3.29.11) itself there is a great verse, which is the Lord's statement:

*Madguṇa-śruti-mātreṇa
mayi sarvaguhāśaye;
Manogatir-avacchinṇā
yathā gaṅgāmbhaso'mbudhau.*

By merely listening to My glories the mind goes towards Me uninterruptedly like the flow of oil and like the flow of the river Gaṅgā towards the ocean.

Kīrtanam: Singing God's Glories

Ajāmila says: 'I was an ordinary brahmin of Kanyākubja, and a sinner of the worst type. It's impossible for you to imagine what all I did in life. In order to please my concubine, I cheated, killed, robbed, gambled, and did whatever evil was possible on earth. I had ten sons, of whom the youngest, Nārāyaṇa, was my dearest. I was mad on the woman and my children, and was immersed in my own evil world when, one day, I saw three terrible beings, messengers of death, Yama, approaching me. I was scared and shouted for my dear son: "Nārāyaṇā! Nārāyaṇā!" Instantly, I saw with my own eyes the messengers of Lord Viṣṇu come, discuss philosophy with Yama's messengers, and drive them away. Not only this, they took me to the abode of Viṣṇu! Imagine my fortune! Do you not believe God is compassionate? What good deed had I done except for calling my son at that terrible moment?'

Sage Nārada says: 'King Parikṣit was a great emperor, and so he might have had the good tendencies of a devotee. Ajāmila's case is a mystery and shows how God loves the human being. But consider me. I was born as the son of a housemaid in a community of Vedic ritualists. I was engaged in serving yogis since my childhood. During the four-month period (*cāturmāsya*) when the yogis remain in a single place devoting their time to intense contemplation and study, I was happy to be able to continuously listen to their discourses on Hari. Pleased with my services, those illumined yogis blessed me profusely. Being

blessed by them, I developed a taste for their way of life. Hearing Śrī Kṛṣṇa's glories, I became attracted to him. My mother, being a servant lady and ignorant, was greatly attached to me. I was only five years old when one day she was bitten by a snake. I then decided to leave the place, and headed northwards. I selected a dense forest and sat down to meditate there. The Lord appeared soon and bestowed his vision on me. But this only distressed me more. I wanted to see him again and again, and so began to struggle once more. It was then that I heard him say that I will not have his vision again in that body, and that my mission was to sing his glories in the three worlds. He had chosen me! I continued singing his praises till I was alive; death tore away my bondage. I was with the Lord for a cycle of creation, and then got this divine body. According to the Lord's instructions, I now sing his praises always (*kīrtanam*). Since I have this divine body, I can go to any world without any hindrance. My whole life has thus become blessed by singing the praises of the Lord.'

Kanakadāsa says: 'Nārada is a *brahmarṣi*, a great sage. The great Ajāmila must have done a lot of sadhana in his previous births. But consider me. I was an idiotic shepherd by birth, a low-born. I began to sing some silly songs standing behind the Keśava temple in Udupi, and the Lord turned his face towards me and, breaking the wall between us, began to enjoy my songs! The Lord is loving and compassionate beyond all comprehension.'

Smaranam: Remembering God

Prahlāda says: 'My father, Hiranyakaśipu, was a well-known demon. Since my childhood, I was persecuted on account of my love for the Lord. When my father wanted to know what I had learnt from my guru, I told him about devotion to Hari. This incensed him and he ordered that I should be executed. As the *Bhāgavata* (7.5.43-4) rightly describes my father's attempts, I was trampled by elephants, bitten by serpents, attacked through black magic, imprisoned, rolled down the mountainside, poisoned, starved,

exposed to bad weather, burnt in fire, and immersed in water. Yet, Hari protected me always. Imagine, *nothing* happened to me! I only kept on remembering him, that's all. His mercy is boundless. Finally, when my father challenged me to prove my words that the Lord was everywhere by showing the Lord to him in a pillar of the palace, I said yes. Hiranyakaśipu then struck the pillar, from which the Lord came out in the form of a man-lion. As you know, no man or god could kill my father. So as man-lion, the Lord blessed my father with eternal life, removing the obstacle called his demon-body. That ended my difficulty. Later, when the Lord tried to test me by offering numerous boons, I said no to them. He was happy, and placed me on the throne, to rule the kingdom. Ultimately the Lord took me to his realm. This is the glory of the remembrance of God.'

Vālmiki says: 'Prahlaḍa was a king's son. He repeated the Lord's names and remembered Him constantly. What about me? The whole world venerates me now as a *brahmarṣi*, and the author of the epic *Rāmāyaṇa*. But I didn't even know how to repeat Rāma's name properly! You all know what I was before. Born in a brahmin family, I didn't even know how to repeat God's names and became an embodiment of death and destruction, killing wayfarers. Sages took pity on me and told me how to repeat God's names the reverse way because I was averse to repeat the Lord's names. Soon I developed deep concentration, and an anthill (*valmika*) grew all over me. The sages said that my emergence from the *valmika* meant a second birth to me, and blessed me with devotion. I am what I am now because of remembering the Lord.'

Pādasevanam: Service of the Lord's Feet

Guha says: 'These devotees who told you their stories are great men. But please look at me. I was an insignificant creature, looking after some hunters in a small village. When Lord Rāma came near our village in order to cross the Sarayū river, how fortunate I was to wash his feet with my own hands! That was all I did.

Nothing more. Just by serving the Lord's feet for a moment, I had everything. I attained supreme bliss. That very moment all my wants were fulfilled. So I request you, follow the ways of the holy. Lead holy lives. Serve the Lord's devotees with all your heart.'

Ahalyā says: 'Guha was fortunate! I did not even do that much! My life was far more miserable than anyone else's. I had none to feel for me. I had become a stone, and lay there—in heat and cold, rain and thunder—waiting for the lotus feet of Lord Rāma to touch my head. At last he came, and his feet touched the stone that was me. That was the moment of my liberation. So I tell you, the Lord's lotus feet can turn a stone into a human being. It is the purifier of sinners. O dear human beings! Never forget the Lord's feet even for a moment in your life. All your sins will vanish, all your sufferings will go, all your unhappiness will go, if only you think of the Lord's feet.'

Arcanam: Worship of the Lord's Image

Mirābai says: 'Countless people have condemned the worship of the Lord's images. But do you know how I grew in love for my dear Kṛṣṇa? It was all by worshipping his little image. The image is his representation. If he is all-pervading, can't he be in the image? If he can create everything, and if everything came out of him, can't he be in the image? I didn't know if it was day or night, heaven or hell, life or death. I concentrated my mind on my dear Kṛṣṇa, worshipped his image, loved it, prayed to it, decorated it, and he showered innumerable blessings upon this poor little soul. You can't imagine the joy, the happiness, the bliss that I enjoyed. My body would burst with joy. My mind would always be filled with joy. And today I am eternally one with the beloved Kṛṣṇa—the dear cowherd who runs after cows! We are the cows and he is the cowherd. His love for us is unimaginable.'

Ekalavya says: 'Mirā worshipped the Lord's image all her life. I did not even do that. I had seen my guru, Droṇācārya, once, and had made his image using earth. I practised

archery before that image. Imagine, I became so proficient that everyone was surprised at my archery. All because I worshipped the image of my guru! There was some jealousy though, on account of which I had to sacrifice my finger. But that didn't in any way harm my life. Perhaps I should have lost my life itself, who knows? Will the worship of the guru go in vain? I was blessed profusely by the Lord, which it is impossible to narrate in words.'

Vandanam: Saluting the Lord

The sinner woman says: 'The Lord's compassion can't be expressed in words. I was well known as a wicked woman in the town. Everyone scorned me. People wouldn't dare to throw a stone at me for fear of being polluted. Such an evil person that I was, I became transformed into the most fragrant and pure flower when I saw the Lord in the noble man's house and saluted him just *once*. I don't know whatever happened to me, but the moment I touched his feet, I was a changed person. The Lord saved me. With his divine intervention, there was none to hurt me anymore. I am a liberated woman since then.'

Paṭācārā says: 'My story is worse than anybody else's. I was mad! When I lost my parents, husband, and children on a single day, I became mad. I roamed about in the streets of Vaiśālī, screaming and shouting. People pitied me, but what could they do? At last, when I saw the Lord giving a discourse in the garden, something prompted me to salute him, to touch his feet. That was the moment I got transmuted into a saint. That was when the old Paṭācārā was gone and the Therī was born. Do you still doubt God's grace?'

Rasik the Scavenger says: 'I was an untouchable, cleaning toilets. I would see the Lord as Ramakrishna bless so many devotees. Would he be compassionate on a wretch like me too, I thought one day. When he passed by, I saluted him. That was it. He blessed me and promised to come at the last moment. When I left my body, he came to receive me and took me to the blessed abode of bliss.'

Dāsyam: Service of the Lord

Hanumān says: 'I lived in the forest, on nuts and fruits. I served my master, Sugrīva, to the extent I could. One glorious morning, I saw the brothers, Śrī Rāma and Lakṣmaṇa, coming towards us. That was the greatest moment in my life. Sugrīva asked me to go and meet the brothers on the way: I was chosen to represent the *vānara* group. Rāma was pleased with this servant, and since that day, I have been fortunate to serve my Lord to my heart's content. What a bliss it is to serve Him!

Latu (Adbhutananda) says: 'Hanumān was a scholar and great man. I was an unlettered servant boy. Today I am worshipped as a saint! All because he accepted my little service. And what, after all, did I do?'

Sakhyam: Friendship with the Lord

Kucela says: 'You will not believe me, but I am Kṛṣṇa's friend! He was an emperor's son while I was a poor brahmin's. We studied together, parted after studies, and I thought he had forgotten me. My family grew big but there was nothing to eat. My wife insisted that I should go to Krishna, my friend, once. I was so shy to do that. And I was afraid too, because it would be humiliating if he didn't recognize me. But he did! To my surprise, he remembered his dear friend. I didn't have the courage to seek his help, though my wife had told me repeatedly that I should tell Kṛṣṇa my pitiable story and seek his help. After enjoying his hospitality for three days, I returned empty-handed. But when I returned home, where was my house? In place of my hut there stood a palatial building, and my children were playing like princes! It was all Kṛṣṇa's play!'

The **cowherd boys** say: 'We never for a moment thought our friend Kṛṣṇa was someone big. He was just like anyone of us. We played with him, fed him, jumped on him, taunted him, enjoyed fun with him! As a poet has sung, Kṛṣṇa would tie a cowherd boy's ponytail to the tail of a calf and enjoy the fun. He would steal butter for our sake. It was all fun! We never realized we were playing with

God. But the moment he left us, we felt acute pain in our hearts. '

Ātmanivedanam: Surrendering to God

Yaśodā says: 'My child Kṛṣṇa stole my Self completely. I fed him, served him, scolded him, tied him up once—oh, I did everything to my dear little son. His pranks kept me busy the whole day. Because I loved him so he showed me his uniqueness too on several occasions. When he ate mud once, I asked him to open his mouth. He showed me the universe inside his mouth! Yet nothing stopped me from feeling that he was my dear son and serve him. The joy that I felt is incomparable. I surrendered my all to him. The wonder that *vātsalya* is can only be perfectly felt when we love the Lord as our child.'

Girish Chandra Ghosh says: 'Everyone knows what a "friend" I was of Ramakrishna. I would use foul words to him also. I was the worst type of sinner. See how he changed me!'

Aghoremani (Gopāler Mā) says: '*Vātsalya*! Yaśodā was Gopāla's mother. I was a poor, ignorant widow. But you know how Gopāla loved me! He ate what little I could afford, played with me, and even served me!'

Rādhā says: 'Of all the attitudes, that of love is the most painful because there is only *viraha* here. The pain, however, is immense joy. It can't be explained. There is simply nothing earthly to compare with the joy of having the supreme Lord as one's beloved. He steals everything—mind, heart, and soul. Every cell in the body becomes the Lord. A moment's separation from him is like suffering a million hells. *Madhura*, it's all *madhura*, sweet. It's sweetness itself. I became blessed by loving Kṛṣṇa.'

Sanandana says: 'Having attained the knowledge of the Self, having attained fulfilment, when I contemplate on the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa, the peace that I experience cannot be comprehended by the mind. Surrendering the enlightened Self at the Lord's feet brings all-encompassing peace. It is beatitude itself. This is the most ideal way of thinking of God—to contemplate on him ever and ever with one-pointedness, and seeking absolutely

nothing in return. To meditate on him is its own fulfilment. That itself is eternal peace.'

Finally, Sri Ramakrishna tells about the Mother-and-child attitude.

Mātrbhāvaḥ: God as Mother

Sri Ramakrishna says: 'My attitude towards God is that of a child towards its mother. Brahman alone is addressed as the Mother. This is because a mother is an object of great love. The primal Power, *mahāmāyā*, has covered Brahman. As long as that covering remains, the Vedāntic formula, "I am He", that is, man is the supreme Brahman, does not rightly apply. As long as that covering remains, one should call on God as Mother. Addressing God, the devotee should say, "Thou art the Mother and I am Thy child." Pray to the Divine Mother with a longing heart. Her vision dries up all craving for the world and completely destroys all attachment to "woman and gold". She is by no means a god-mother. She is your own mother. With a yearning heart persist in your demands on Her. The child holds to the skirt of its mother and begs a penny of her to buy a kite. Immediately she unlocks the cash-box with a click and throws the child a penny. You too must force your demand on the Divine Mother. She will come to you without fail. Everything can be achieved through bhakti alone. Those who want the knowledge of Brahman will certainly achieve that also by following the trail of bhakti. The Mother supplies the devotees with the 'heap' of knowledge. God is your own Mother. Is She a stepmother? Is it an artificial relationship? If you cannot force your demand on Her, then on whom can you force it? Enforce your demand. He to whom the enjoyment of worldly happiness appears tasteless, he who takes no delight in anything of the world and becomes sincerely grief-stricken for the vision of the Mother, to him alone the Mother comes running, leaving all Her other duties. This attitude of regarding God as Mother is the last word in sadhana. "O God, Thou art my Mother and I am Thy child"—this is the last word in spirituality.' □

A Call to Students

PROF G. PADMANABAN

G. Padmanaban is Honorary Professor, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, and Emeritus Scientist, CSIR, since 1998. He was Visiting Scientist/Professor, University of Chicago, USA, for over a decade. He has several important researches in the field of biotechnology to his credit, and has received many awards, among which Padma Shri is an important one. Prof Padmanabhan was invited to preside over the College Day celebrations of Sri Ramakrishna Vidyashala, Mysore, where he delivered this interesting lecture, advising students about their future careers.

I think it was John Galbraith who said: 'India is a functioning anarchy.' We all understand what's happening in this country. But why did Galbraith call it a 'functioning anarchy'? It means there are some rare individuals and institutions who are like sparks in darkness. They are committed people who carry on the load of the entire nation. That is why this country is functioning despite all the things that are happening here.

I spent only a few hours in this Ramakrishna Vidyashala. I could very well understand its ethos. I was simply moved. I really, honestly did not expect such an atmosphere, though I was myself a student of the Ramakrishna Mission. I don't think I had the privilege of this kind of an environment in an institution. The catholicity of the swamijis and their sincere devotion to the cause of holistic education has made this possible. I am happy because students are in what we call the impressionable age. They spend time in the school during that stage and student life leaves an indelible mark on them. Students who get proper training in such institutions can be exposed to any part of the world. They will be the guardians of our culture and tradition. I observed the creativity of the students in the physics department, in the exhibition, in the Mona Lisa drawing, in the hydraulic crane where the students have used piston to pump water. This one was overwhelming.

I also saw the imagination of the swamijis

in the unique Nature School. I don't know whether I can sufficiently praise Sri Peter of this institution for all the wonderful paintings. I don't know which institution or college has 22 playgrounds, but this Ramakrishna Vidyashala has. This is not merely an institution but a movement. It imparts a holistic education which will lift students to be above average and be real leaders of tomorrow. I am not saying all this just because I am the chief guest today, but I sincerely feel that this institution is a model institution.

I am a scientist, basically. I want to highlight the happenings in the field of science and what our students should be doing for this country.

Most of us believe that the 21st century is the century of life sciences. The previous century belonged to physics and chemistry. The present century will belong to life sciences. As you know, a lot is expected from the human-gene sequence. Genetic engineering is likely to be a big force tomorrow. The discovery of new drugs, medicines and vaccines can change the face of life. Tomorrow, the method of production of grains and food will be totally different. There are several ethical questions being raised. People are talking about Gene Technology and, at the same time, about cloning. You can do gene therapy to treat diseases. But can you do a gene therapy to enhance the performance of an individual, or to enhance the intelligence of an individual?

Nevertheless, these are very exciting times in the field of science. One sad feature of India is, very few students come forward for science and research. Everybody wants to do computer science. There is nothing wrong in that. But this is rather sad because there will be no mechanical engineers in the country at all. You will have only virtual buildings—buildings on the computer screen.

Last year, a missionary school arranged a parent counselling. Some 500 students were invited along with their parents, and counselling was given as to what kind of career they should take up after the tenth standard. They requested me to advise them about the different courses in the fields of science and technology. I noticed that of the 500 students, 400 went for information technology, 30-40 went for the armed forces, and only 11 students opted for science and technology. I did not know what to say. This is the ground reality today. Students do not want to take up science or do research.

Science is a powerful instrument for change but, above all, its object is to improve the quality of life and alleviate suffering. Scientific research is not done for personal glorification. It requires a commitment. Education and research always go together. They are not independent entities.

Some students are very excited about doing research. Many students write to me, expressing their desire to reach the moon. I get

letters like that. But parents, on the contrary, encourage their children to take up computer engineering and to go to the software field. They will get much better salaries, but children must be advised to take up science and technology studies. If India is to compete with the world, we need to produce original processes and products. Are we generating our own processes and products, and our own technology? Any brilliant student, going to the IIT to do some course, is hired by a multinational company to sell somebody else's products. Every intelligent student flies over to some rich country. I do not say you shouldn't go abroad. We should go abroad and get exposed to the outer world. But we must return and serve this country. All of us should not become traders and businesspeople. It is not just enough to earn well. Our country is very poor in hardware. We must think of newer processes, technologies, and products. Originality is needed in India. There is corruption, politics, etc here, but mere blaming is not enough. We must not blame about what's not there in this country, but see what's there here.

Unless we take a positive attitude, we cannot achieve anything here. I think this is the philosophy our students must have. Students are future leaders. They have a responsibility towards this country. My plea as a scientist is that the younger generation must wake up to the call of this country and come forward to serve this nation. □

'In the West I have found that those who are in the employment of others have their seats fixed in the back rows in the Parliament, while the front seats are reserved for those who have made themselves famous by self-exertion, or education, or intelligence. ... The education which does not help the common mass of people to equip themselves for the struggle for life, which does not bring out strength of character, a spirit of philanthropy, and the courage of a lion—is it worth the name? Real education is that which enables one to stand on one's own legs. ... The peasant, the shoemaker, the sweeper, and such other lower classes of India have much greater capacity for work and self-reliance than you. ... Modern education has changed your fashion, but new avenues of wealth lie yet undiscovered for want of the inventive genius. ... And you will become extinct in your vain search for employment, making it the be-all and end-all of your life,' says *Swami Vivekananda*.

The Mendicant

'Khelati mama hrdaye rāmaḥ

khelati mama hrdaye.

Śānti-videha-sutā-sahacāri

daharāyodhyā-nagara-vihāri

*Khelati mama hrdaye rāmaḥ khelati...'**

'O Bābā! O Bābā!' The mendicant turned round and saw a few children following him at a distance. The mendicant began once again: *'...Śānti-videha-sutā-sahacāri...'* 'O Bābā! Listen!' Now the mendicant stopped. The children ran to him and said: 'O Bābā! Nothing today?' The mendicant shook his head to say no. He did not have any toy or sweet to give them.

A little girl said: 'Bābā! The Rṣabha-vāhana festival will be held tonight in Madurai. If you take us there, we can get a lot of toys and eatables.' Other boys and girls jumped up, clapped their hands, and sang in chorus: 'Yes! Yes! Bābāji! We want to go to the Rṣabha-vāhana festival.' The mendicant smiled and replied: 'Go tell your parents.' The children began walking behind him, around him, and backwards in front him. 'Please take us there! Please take us to Madurai!' Unconcerned, the mendicant began to sing once again: *'...daharāyodhyā-nagara-vihāri...'* But when the children began pestering him, he said: 'Do you know how far Madurai is? Have you any idea, anyone of you?' A little girl lifted her right hand as high as she could, and replied: 'F...a...r away!' 'Then?' But once again the children began their old tune: they wanted to go to Madurai.

No one was afraid of this mendicant. He was naked except for a piece of cloth around his waist. He had matted hair, his eyes were

slightly reddish, and he was tall. However, nothing scared the children, for they all loved him dearly.

The mendicant said: 'If you really want to go to see the festival, come and meet me near our tree this evening. But remember, inform your parents and come.' The mendicant walked away, singing in a melodious tone: *'Khelati mama hrdaye rāmaḥ...'*

Parents laughed and laughed at their children's words. 'What did you say? That madman will take you all the way to Madurai from here tonight, to see the Rṣabha-vāhana festival? He is of course mad. But he is making all of you mad.' When they failed to convince their children, the parents left them alone because they knew it was impossible even in dream to travel so far in such a short time.

That was a strange hamlet. The villagers loved this 'madman'. Initially they would even tie up their children at home for fear of him. But when they saw he was absolutely harmless, they allowed their children to play with him.

Anyway, that evening some seven or eight children assembled near their meeting point, a huge tree. When they saw the mendicant approaching, they clapped their hands and ran towards him. 'Take us to Madurai. Feed us well.' 'Okay, okay,' the mendicant. 'Come on, sit on my shoulders.' One, two, three, four, the children climbed wherever they could. 'Ready?' asked the mendicant. 'Ready,' they all shouted in unison, and enjoyed the fun. But the next moment the children were in Madurai! Surprise of surprises, the mendicant was walking with them along the crowded and brilliantly illuminated streets of Madurai. The attractive Madurai fair in connection with the festival was on, and one could see hundreds of big and small shops

* 'Rāma sports in my heart. He has the peace called Sitā for his companion. The cave of my heart is his Ayodhyā city...'

with various attractive articles everywhere. The simple village children enjoyed the fair. Whatever the children wanted, that the mendicant bought for them. The children wondered where he got the money from. They ate their fill, bought as many toys as they could, sang, danced, enjoyed toy-horse rides, and said at last: 'Bābā, let's return.' Once again they all climbed upon him, and they were back. The next morning, even as their parents listened in astonishment, the children narrated their wonderful experiences. The parents wouldn't believe at all, had they not seen the toys. The mendicant became the talk of the village. That was the day when he was recognized as a saint and not a madman. The whole village ran about in search of him. They all wanted to serve him, ask for boons from him, seek his pardon for calling him mad. But where was he? The moment recognition came, the mendicant left the village for good. The children wept bitterly, and the elders too wept bitterly.

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Tiruvisanalloor on River Kaveri was the village where our mendicant was born. This village is near Kumbakonam. When the saint was born, there were many auspicious signs to herald his birth. His mother had so many supernatural experiences that sometimes she would become scared about the welfare of her sweet little son. The boy was named Sivarama, and he became dear to one and all. He exuded joy and delight. Sivarama's father was a famous pundit and a traditional brahmin by name Moksham Somasundara Avadhani. He was so famous that the local king, Shahji (1684-1712), had donated Tiruvisanalloor and some other adjoining hamlets to some 43 such scholars as gift. So Avadhani was quite rich. When the boy was about 8 years old, he was invested with the sacred thread. That brought about a great transformation in him. He took religion so seriously, and practised japa, meditation, puja, etc so sincerely, that the parents themselves became scared for fear that their darling son should become a monk. So at the age of 10, he was married to a baby of a nearby

village. That, of course, was the custom in those days, and it was during the 19th century that the curse called child-marriage was given a beautiful send-off from India.

The boy didn't understand what it meant to be married. Even after his marriage, Sivarama continued with his spiritual practices in all earnestness. Perhaps owing to some spiritual power in him, he was a brilliant student. He especially liked studying the Advaita Vedanta. He was thrilled to read the arguments of Sankara and would meditate on the statements of Sankara for long hours. Time passed in this way, and Avadhani thought that his son would be a wonderful successor to him. But God had other plans.

The news came from his wife's village that the son-in-law should visit that village once. That was part of the tradition, and the boy was sent to his father-in-law's with all gaiety. The unassuming Sivarama went there. They all welcomed him, and a girl of about 9 or 10 came and saluted him. That was his wife. 'Wife!' That word struck Sivarama like a lightning. He sat where he was for a long time. He pondered over the 'wife and husband' relationship, home, family, etc for quite some time. Revulsion welled up from within. He tried to calm himself, but no, he couldn't. The disgust for this 'wife and husband' idea grew so much that, without informing anyone, he simply walked away.

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'Venerable sir, please accept me as your disciple.'

The banks of the holy River Kaveri. Mother Kaveri flowed making a jingling sound. Birds flew around, singing in joy. Under a beautiful, huge tree sat in meditation the holy monk, Paramasivendra Saraswati. He opened his eyes. 'Who are you, my child?' he asked. Sivarama replied: 'I am a seeker. I don't know who I am. But I want to know who I am.' Paramasivendra Saraswati laughed like a child. 'All right, all right. You wish to know who you are.' So the boy was accepted. After some period of the usual testing and accepting, Sivarama received the monastic

vows. He became Sadasiva Brahmendra Saraswati.

The sacred vows of sannyasa had tremendous effect on the young monk. All the hidden treasures of renunciation, love of God, yearning for Truth, etc manifested themselves to their fullest in him. He began to dislike scholarship, and whenever scholars came to his guru, he would meet them first and defeat them in argument. It so happened on several occasions that the pundits would feel insulted at the way this little sannyasi spoke. His teacher came to know of it, and saw that this was the last obstacle in the way of his dear disciple's realizing the Truth. So he pretended to be angry one day, and scolded Sadasiva: 'You babble too much! Why can't you hold your tongue?' That was it. Since that day, Sadasiva Brahmendra never spoke. It was only years after this incident that he began uttering some words, and that when absolutely necessary.

The time had come. Sadasiva Brahmendra saluted his teacher, sought his blessings, and walked away. Clothes fell away somewhere. Food came some days, and some days he had to fast. He forgot he had a body. The river bed was his bedroom. The trees were his shelter, the birds and wild animals were his companions. His handsome appearance glowed with spiritual lustre. He had only one thought: Truth. And Truth did not hold back from revealing itself to him for long.

Sadasiva Brahmendra roamed about from village to village. Some fed him, some chided him. He did not care. At times he enjoyed sumptuous meals from the leftovers, along with the dogs. It was during one such sojourn that the village children witnessed his supernatural powers.

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Sadasiva Brahmendra walked and walked. One day, while he was meditating on the banks of the River Kaveri, some fishermen saw a huge wave engulf him. In the evening, however, they saw him once again, in the same meditation posture. Another time, Sadasiva Brahmendra went into samadhi on

the river bed near Kodumudi. It was a remote area and hardly anyone went to such places in those days. He was forgotten by the world. Four months later, a few people were digging the river bed for sand. Suddenly a spade brought out blood. The digger screamed and fainted. When the others carefully dug around, they found the saint. Sadasiva Brahmendra's left hand had been severed because of the digging and that brought his mind back to the mendacious world. He realized his hand had gone. He smiled at the terrified diggers, and simply walked away.

'A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid' (St Matthew, 5:14). Sadasiva Brahmendra's fame spread far and wide. The Tondaman chief waited to meet him for more than six months. At last, one early morning, when Sadasiva Brahmendra was in meditation, the chief succeeded. Worldly people have only worldly ends in mind when they meet even the greatest of saints. The Tondaman chief had no son. 'I've been doing *tapasya* for six months. You *must* save me.' The saint melted. He wrote something on sand and said: 'Read this.' The chief couldn't. Sadasiva Brahmendra had given him a mantra but the chief had failed to accept it. Sadasiva wiped the writing off, and simply ran away. The Tondaman chief realized his folly. He had lost a great treasure. What would he do now? He simply filled the sand on which the saint had written in bags, and took it to his palace. The moment the sand entered the palace, his times changed. He prospered, had a son, became wealthy, powerful, and famous. The family members would apply this sand on their foreheads as they would apply sacred ash.

Sadasiva Brahmendra was an Advaitin and a devotee too. He composed a number of songs, all with an Advaitic background. He also wrote quite a few Advaitic treatises which have become masterpieces. He had declared once that he would give up his body on the banks of Kaveri at Nerur near Karur. He did as he had prophesied. A monument stands on this spot even today. □

Book Reviews

SWAMI VIVEKANANDA IN CONTEMPORARY INDIAN NEWS (1893-1902): WITH SRI RAMAKRISHNA AND THE MISSION: Edited by Sankari Prasad Basu. Published by The Ramakrishna Mission Institute of Culture, Gol Park, Kolkata, 700029. Pp. 529. Rs.325.

The 1893 Parliament of Religions in Chicago, USA, was a great event in the history of the religions of the world. It was there that the universal religion of Vedanta was presented by Swami Vivekananda to the world. This was the beginning of the Neo-Vedanta movement, which sprouted with the advent of Sri Ramakrishna.

What Swami Vivekananda spoke on the platform of the parliament and later in various places in America and Europe had a tremendous impact on the intellectuals of those two continents. His triumphant return to India was hailed throughout the country, as he went from Colombo to Almora giving illuminating discourses. Peasants, workers, traders, professionals, the rich, the poor all rose in unison to shake off the shackles of imperialism.

Swami Vivekananda in Contemporary Indian News takes readers back to the turn of the 19th century. As the subtitle indicates, the volume includes Sri Ramakrishna and the Mission as well. Newspapers are like a mirror of society. The reflections here become a permanent record of history. Professor Basu has retrieved this record and opened it before us for a better look at the history of this period.

Prof Basu took his cue from Marie Louise Burke, who traced the course of events in Swamiji's life before and after the parliament, by culling all the relevant news from the contemporary American press, and interpreting it to the world. These new discoveries were published in the sixties of the preceding century. Following the same methodology, Prof Basu earlier published a similar volume in 1969, jointly with Sunil Behari Ghosh. For this he had to travel widely and cull material from various regions of India. This was a Herculean task, but Prof Basu did it. It kept him occupied for almost four decades. The present volume brings out the material newspaper-wise and chronologically. Here, *The Hindu* occupies the largest space (308 pages), followed by *The Light of the East* (79 pages), *The Tribune* from Lahore (58 pages), *The Dawn* (34 pages), and *Karnataka Prakashika* (9 pages). Topics also vary greatly.

Various social and religious questions spurted during this period, and one such was crossing the seas. Swamiji's visit to the West was a breakthrough, and it eased a number of other tensions. This is reflected in the editorial of *The Hindu* of 23 May 1894. Other contemporary movements such as Theosophy are also covered in these pages. Even after ten decades, the material presented here transports the reader into the world of a century ago.

The most important part of the book is the Introduction, running into over 129 pages. This coordinates all the news items given chronologically and the reader acquires new insights in the entire Ramakrishna-Vivekananda movement in contemporary Indian society. In the Publisher's Note, it is mentioned that a few more volumes will be published. Readers who go through this one would be eagerly waiting for the next.

The volume has been produced nicely, using a reader-friendly type, and it deserves a prominent place in libraries, both institutional and personal.

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ESSAYS ON VEDIC AND INDO-EUROPEAN CULTURE: By Boris Oguibenine. Published by Motilal Banarsidass, 41-UA Bungalow Road, New Delhi 110007. 1999. Pp. 257. Rs.495.

This collection of essays is an English translation of the author's French book *Essais Sur la Culture Védique et Indo-Européenne* (Paris, 1985). It has been published by Motilal Banarsidass with the assistance of the Embassy of France in India. The content includes seven published/unpublished papers of the author, and exhibits an attempt to reconstruct the cultural and religious pattern on the basis of Vedic and Indo-European literary sources. The sources have been studied in a comparative perspective, ie objective yet sympathetic. The author (b. 1940) is a Professor in Sanskrit and South Asian Studies at the University of Strasbourg, France.

The author tries to offer a new approach to the Vedic theory of sacrifice from the viewpoint of the priest. In a way it is a kind of exercise in hermeneutics. It makes an effort to understand the priestly act: how it was conditioned by the conflict between

the groups practising sacrifice and those not practising it. It also tries to expose the terms between the patron of the sacrifice and the officiant. In this context, the problem of *dakṣiṇā* is also solved. The book further tackles some issues in Vedic and Indo-European religions, like the type of warrior, the similarity of the *soma* offering and the offering in the form of words, and the early origins of the yogic practices in the Vedic period.

The essays attempt to correlate Vedic and Indo-European cultures. The latter one is the result of reconstructions. The object of cultural reconstruction is spiritual rather than material. The cart and the yoke, although material, symbolize objects in the Indo-European culture. The Roman *iugum* and Vedic yoke are comparable. The Roman *augurs* had the theory of a mystic value of the yoke. The Vedic *śirā* denoting the plough was used in ancient times in Syria, Mesopotamia, and China. The Vedic seers thought of bringing together the act of ploughing and its result—reaping the fruit, both in terms of agricultural benefits and the benefits gained for the sacrifice of the officiant. The deed and its effect are linked. This phenomenon is closely associated with the karma doctrine, so fundamental to the religions of Indian origin.

Vedic *dhenā* and Avestan *daenā* are closely associated. The cow and poetry become one for the Indo-Iranians and cow was a great economic asset to the Indo-Iranians and to Indo-Europeans.

Metaphors like cow/bull or man/woman couple are very common to these cultures; they are virtually universal. Metaphors, on their part, are a strategic instrument for the analysis of culture. Twilight at dawn is an ancient Indo-European metaphor. The Homeric metaphor of *èn nuktós amolgôî* ('in the middle of the milk of night' —*Odyssey*, 4.841), and the Vedic expression *samāne āhan ...viśvarūpe pāyasi* ('I create the song the same day in the middle of this milk which has various forms' —*Rg Veda*, 1.186.4) are quite close in form and content. Likewise, the *skhétlios* of Homer and the Vedic warrior (*kṣatriya*) have similarities. Both have action-oriented functions. When Zeus wants to prevent the sailors from returning, he is *skhétlios*. The *kṣatriya* undertakes three royal rituals, namely, *rājāsūya*, *vājapeya* and *āsvamedha*. The chariot or the royal steed runs through the native and foreign lands, thereby dispossessing the rivals. Although the rituals are associated with the renovation of the universe, the course demonstrates the spatial zone over which the royal power will extend.

The purpose of the travels of warriors is war, but they also serve the sacrificial work. There is a close link between *dakṣiṇā* and war. The relationship between *vāja* (victory) and *dakṣiṇā* is important. The warrior ensures sacrifice and plunders for 'others' (sacrificial practices). He amasses cattle as

the poet amasses words. He gives cows to the poet and becomes the patron of the sacrifice. The cow, notably, has been identified with words. The sacrificial words are equal to the cows. The *razzia* of the cattle is a Vedic theme that connects words and cows.

The Vedic texts, likewise, have brought together the liqueur and the words and have made them one. The *soma* offering is effective only if it is accompanied by the *brāhmaṇa*. The Vedic religious thought deliberately puts together the objects offered and the means of rendering the sacrificial words effective. The phrase 'cooked words' has been significantly used by the author to denote the substitution of the act of speech for the object that this speech must present to the recipient of the offering. It designates the similarity of the *soma* offering and the offering in the form of words.

The Vedic poetry distinguishes between solid and liquid food for the gods and also between material and non-material offerings. The officiants, expert in words, contribute to the preparing of *soma* and there is a *soma* which can be consumed by the *brāhmaṇas* (brahmins, the holders of the secret). This is true consumption. There is a myth about the ascent of the terrestrial *soma* and the descent of the celestial *soma*. The latter is converted into divine speech and the former into the human words offered to the gods. The clarification of *soma* is associated with the search for Brahman. Clarified Soma procures the happy outcome of the brahmin.

The Vedic man claims to be privileged as the performer of sacrifice in opposition to the non-sacrificers who are his rivals. Indra is called upon to distinguish the Aryans (sacrificers) from the Dasyus (non-sacrificers). The act of sacrifice distinguishes the person himself in the eyes of the gods and the sacrifice of a particular kind and volume incurs merit that surpasses the sacrifice of a rival.

The author concludes his analysis by stating that there are figures common to Vedic, Greek, Roman, Avestan and Hittite cultures. Language and culture are (or may be) by themselves complete for the natives but are incomplete as and when compared with other cultures. Systems of communications in which values are attached to facts become more important and take a universal form.

The essays collected in the title under review present an excellent comparative study of Vedic and Indo-European culture. In this age of global awareness of inter-cultural dimensions of human wisdom this publication will prove to be of great importance.

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SUREŚVARA'S VĀRTIKA ON (1) YĀJÑAVALKYA'S DIALOGUE WITH ĀRTABHĀGA AND OTHERS, AND (2) JYOTIS BRĀHMAṆA: By Shoun Hino and K.P. Jog. Published by Motilal Banarsidass. (1) 1999. Pp. xxxiv+552. Rs.595. (2) 2001. Pp. xx+774. Rs.950.

What began merely as a PhD thesis of Dr Shoun Hino of the Nagoya University, Japan, has developed into a masterly service to humanity. In association with Prof K.P. Jog, the scholar of repute from Pune, Dr Hino has been doing something which has not been done till now. To translate the terse *vārtika* of Śrī Sureśvarācārya is not easy. But Dr Hino and Dr Jog have succeeded in bringing out as many as eleven books in this series.

The *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* is a library in itself. It contains so many ideas, so many *vidyās*, and so many meditations that it perhaps takes one a lifetime to master this great Upaniṣad. Śaṅkara wrote a not-so-detailed commentary on this Upaniṣad. But there were many things which needed clarification. In order to say what had been unsaid (*anukta*), to explain what had been said (*ukta*) and also to rectify some minor mistakes (*durukta*) in the commentary, his disciple, Sureśvara, took up the onerous task of writing a *vārtika*. And it's for the first time that this great work is being rendered for the benefit of the English-knowing world. Dr Shoun Hino was awarded the Eastern Study Prize in 1991 by the Eastern Institute Inc. But that's not enough. Because Dr Hino began his studies on Sureśvara as early as in 1976 at the University of Pune. The first ever book that came out was *Sureśvara's Vārtika on Yājñavalkya-Maitreyi Dialogue*, which was published by Motilal Banarsidass in 1981. The translators have not looked back since then. A steady work has enabled these two scholars to bring out the difficult-to-translate work into English.

The first book under review, *Yājñavalkya's Dialogue with Ārtabhāga*, is a detailed account of the second *brāhmaṇa* of the third book of the Upaniṣad. Ārtabhāga asked Yājñavalkya: '*kati grahāḥ, kati atigrahāḥ*, how many perceivers, and how many

over-perceivers are there?' To this, Yājñavalkya replied that there are eight each. And the dialogue ensues. This forms the text of Sureśvara's *vārtika* on the Yājñavalkya-Ārtabhāga dialogue. The second book, *Jyotis Brāhmaṇa*, deals with the true nature of the Self or Brahman within. The portion dealt with is the third *brāhmaṇa* of the fourth book of the *Brhadāranyaka Upaniṣad*. King Janaka asks Yājñavalkya (4.3.2): '*kiṁ-jyotir ayaṁ puruṣa iti*, what light does a person here have?' This begins the dialogue and the great Yājñavalkya goes on from the sun's light to the light of the Self (4.3.6): '*ātmanaiivāyam jyotiṣāste*.' This demands explanation, and Sage Yājñavalkya gives it in a masterly way. But there could be questions, just as this one (*Brhadāranyakopanīṣad-bhāṣya-vārtika*, 1105; see p. 367 of the book under review): '*ātmavastvatirekeṇa nāsti vastvantaraṁ yadi; bāhyāntaḥ pravibhāgo'yaṁ kimāśritya prakalpyate*, if there does not exist anything besides the (real) thing, ie the Ātman, then on what basis is this division into the external and the internal (objects) entertained?' The *vārtika-kāra* replies (verse 1109, p. 368): 'Since there is (affection) of the Ātman by ignorance only owing to (the coming into existence of) ignorance; there is, in reality, not on the part of the inner Self (ignorance), on account of itself or of another.' The main thesis is to distinguish between the Self and the non-Self. As verse 1530 clearly states (see p. 510), 'the connection of ignorance is to be understood with reason only in the case of the intellect etc, which are the products of ignorance, but not in the case of the highest Ātman, which is neither a cause nor an effect, and is ever enlightened.'

The books are indeed of immense value. Towards the end we find a half-verse index of the *vārtika*. A few minor English errors notwithstanding, the translation is grand.

We hope the intellectual and spiritual world will eagerly possess these books and benefit from the translation. Our thanks to Dr Shoun Hino and Dr K.P. Jog for their persistent efforts, and to the publishers for the beautiful printing and publishing.

Prabuddha Bharata

Renounce! Renounce! Sacrifice! Give up! Not for zero. Not for nothing. But to get the higher. But who can do this? You cannot, until you have got the higher. You may talk. You may struggle. You may try to do many things. But renunciation comes by itself when you have got the higher. Then the lesser falls away by itself. This is practical religion. What else? Cleaning streets and building hospitals? Their value consists only in this renunciation. And there is no end to renunciation. The difficulty is they try to put a limit to it—thus far and no farther. But there is no limit to this renunciation, says **Swami Vivekananda**.



PRABUDDHA BHARATA

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Swami Mumukshananda
Swami Sunirmalananda

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